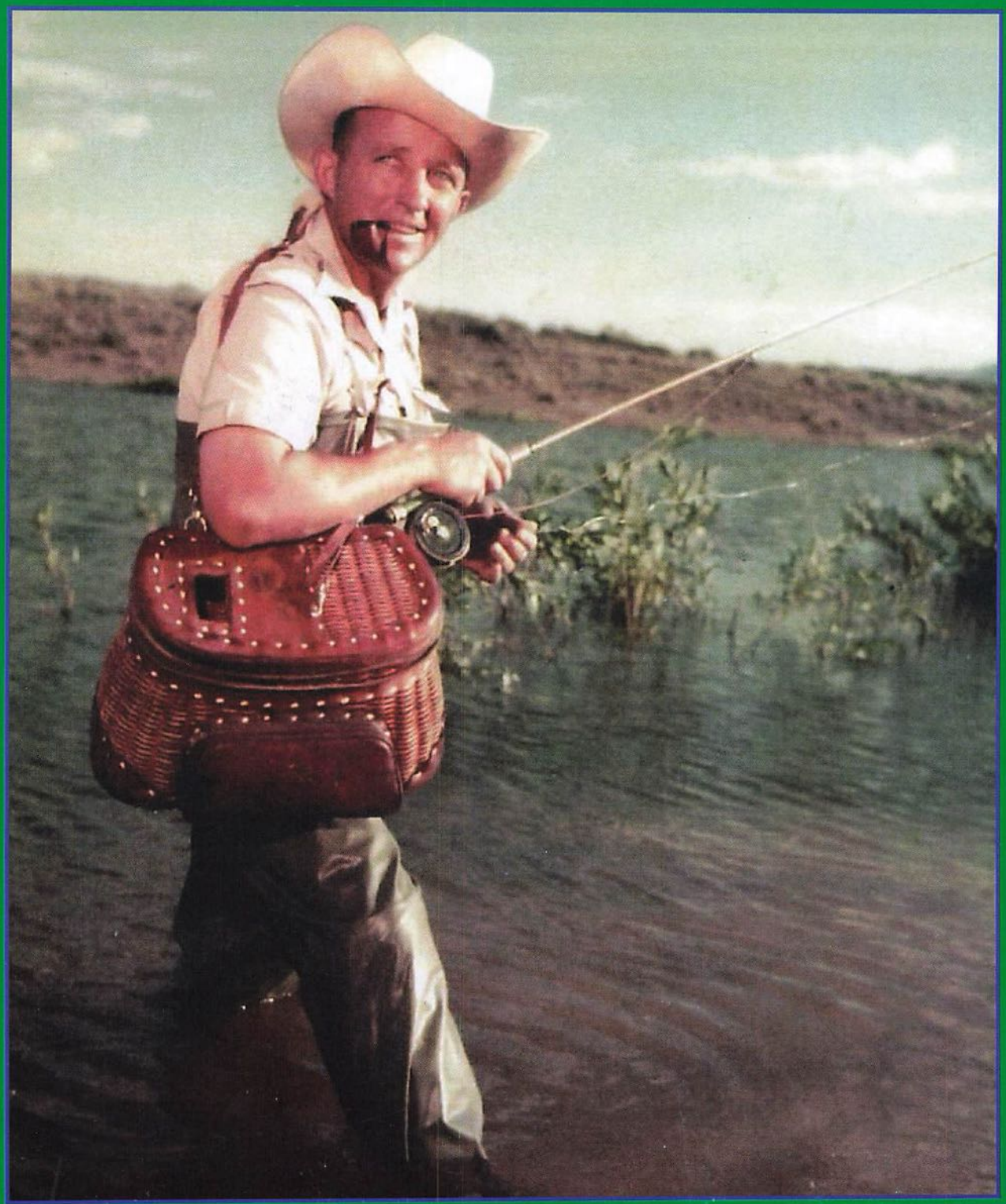
BING

Spring 2008

No. 148



THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

Web sites:

Club:	www.club-crosby.org
BING magazine:	http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html
Bing Crosby Internet Museum:	www.mcckc.edu/~crosby/
Bing Crosby Enterprises:	www.BingCrosby.com

Honorary President: KATHRYN CROSBY

Honorary Members: Harry Crosby - Mary Crosby Brodka - Nathaniel Crosby - Phillip Crosby Jr. Ken Barnes - Pat Boone - Rory Burke - Michael Feinstein - Rich Little - Gia Prima - Andy Williams

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Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and subscription rates effective for 2008 are:

USA and Canada	US $25 per annum
UK	£15 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£16 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$40 per annum
South America / South Africa / Singapore / Japan	£18 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of:
(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC.

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EDITORIAL

Spring greetings and salutations to all my fellow ICC members. I hope 2008 has been a good year for all of you so far, and that you're looking forward to another exciting twelve months immersed in all things Crosby. This year marks the International Club Crosby's seventy-second anniversary. The list of publications that have been around for that many consecutive years is indeed a small one, and we're grateful for the support and enthusiasm of our members for letting us continue on.

I was pleased to see that my editorial in the Winter 2007 issue produced a "thought provoking comment" that was discussed at length on Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum message board. The comment I'm referring to is my position that public awareness of Bing and his accomplishments is far greater today than it was twenty or even ten years ago. What I based this broad statement on is the fact that just ten years ago, there was no best selling, award winning biography of Bing by a professional, renowned author. There was no highly acclaimed, scholarly conference at a major US college examining Bing's life and contributions to American culture in depth. There were no major celebrations of Bing's birthday, where people from all over the world gathered to pay homage to Bing. There was no official, family-run website, nor a chain of restaurants bearing the name Bing Crosby, and decorated with his memorabilia. The list could go on and on, but you get the idea. I stand by my comment, and only add that Bing and his legacy hasn't had it this good in many years, and if the Crosby family continues to promote and market Bing Crosby, an even greater wide-spread recognition of him and his work will become more and more evident as time goes by.

So rather than bemoaning the years lost, or missed opportunities, let's continue to look forward, and each of us, in our own way, continue to do what we can to keep this public awareness of Bing and his accomplishments in the forefront where it belongs.

Now here's Malcolm with what you can look forward to in your first issue of BING magazine for 2008.

Greg Van Beek

I am constantly amazed by the number and variety of contributions to the magazine and this time I have again had to omit items which I had originally planned to include. As usual we have an eclectic mix left for you.

Mary Crosby has written an important letter to us which you will see on a subsequent page. The family means business now and let's hope they can raise Bing's profile and commercial appeal. It's encouraging to read of a number of Crosby events in various parts of the world.

An occasion which I enjoyed immensely was meeting Michael Feinstein in London in January with Ken Crossland. Michael is a tremendous asset to our cause.

Members will be pleased to see an article by Mark Scrimger in our pages. Mark was of course the President of Club Crosby for many years and carried out some amazing research into Bing's life. Talking about research, the article in this issue by Greg Van Beek into Bing's Public Service recordings explores some hitherto undocumented facets of the Crosby life.

Many members will be anxious about the continuation of the Chronological CD series and rest assured that it will continue, at least for the time being on the Sepia label. The ICC has arranged to purchase the first issue in bulk to make it available to members at a discounted price. If we are successful with this approach this time, we shall repeat the exercise but we do need members' support.

A review by Bert Bishop of the very welcome 6-part BBC radio series about Bing is included and of course we have all of our regular contributors in place too.

Finally, may I, on your behalf, congratulate Michael Crampton on reaching his demi-centennial as a member of the club. The British arm of the club might well have folded in 1989 when Reg Bristo passed away, but it was Michael who kept the flame alive and drew together a number of people to take us forward. Well done, Mike and thanks also go to his long-suffering wife Judy for her tolerance and support.

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Thank you to Malcolm for his kind words. It was indeed 50 years ago in December 1957 that I was invited to become a member of the then British Crosby Society by the secretary of the day, Dot Hardiman. I received my first magazine *The Crosby Post* and thus began my 50-year association with the various Crosby clubs. Little could I have imagined then that I would be acting as your secretary in 2008!

It's been an interesting journey, full of friendship and listening to one of the loveliest of all human voices and still I don't have a complete collection, perhaps never will as so much remains to be discovered. If anyone knows the whereabouts of Dot I would be grateful to learn so that I might get in contact with her.

The final Jonzo CDs 50 and 51 are a collector's delight with no less than 15 test pressings being used to bring us superb sound. The series remains available from John McNicholas and you should write to him, with your enquiries at:

Jonzo Records, P O Box 212, Harrow, Middlesex. HA3 7LD, United Kingdom

John McNicholas launched the Jonzo series 24 years ago in September 1984 and he along with Wig Wiggins and all the collectors who made this monumental series available to us deserve our unstinting praise and admiration for their colossal achievement. Well done to the Jonzo team.

As Ken Crossland will be explaining on a subsequent page, the series continues, albeit under a different name and we know that with Sepia Records we can expect a quality product at a reasonable price. I urge all members to support this important and unique series.

NEW MEMBERS

It is a pleasure to welcome the following new members to the ICC and we trust that through their membership they will enhance their knowledge of Bing's long and illustrious career. Indeed it is never too late to join us as one of the new members demonstrates, being in his 92nd year and looking forward to learning more about his idol Bing! It is a particular pleasure to welcome TV Director and producer Bob Wynn who worked with Bing on several occasions.

UNITED STATES

Robert H Wynn (Burbank, California),

ENGLAND

Alfred Stead (Blackheath, London), Richard Foster (Newark, Notts.), Roy Ford (Weybridge, Surrey), Edward Carson (Birkenhead, Merseyside), Chris O'Gara (Paddington, London), J Newman (Colchester, Essex)

DONATIONS

Our list of generous supporters has grown once again and despite an increase in the subscription rate, members have continued their benevolent support for the club.

We acknowledge with gratitude the support of the following members: -

Jean Rainey, Paul Hennessey, Gerard Hanlon, John Davis, Robert Charles Hall, John Salisbury, Frank Startup, Arthur Blood, A Lee, Tom Sim, Michael Tyce, Bill England, Alfred Stead, Brenda Sellers, Edward Broadley, John Teale, John McVicar, Geoffrey Robinson, Edgar Lawson, Dennis Saville, Robert Sharp, John Bignell, Ian Arnott, Roger Addey, June Manton, Sylvia Lawrence, Trevor Wagstaff, Peter Monaghan, Roy Irvine, Jack Larman, George O'Reilly, Klaus Halm, Peter Howard, Stan Woodford, Lew Grassby, Vera Campbell, Matthew & Jean Sprott, Harry Ross, Matthew Conroy, Elizabeth Gregory, Eric Jackson,

Gordon Thomas, Alf Plummer, Ron Holder, Maurice Beardsmore, John R Coleman, Nicholas Morrison, William A Green, Ray W Bendelow, Christine Mann, Donald Bostock, Oisin Andrew, Derek McNamee, Jonathan Russell, George Patmore, Bert Bishop, John Stiles, Des Hellier, Margaret North, Tom Mayer, Cyril Brown, John C Marshall, Bill Wesley, Ken Shaw, Maria Roth, Robert Larkin, Dermott Tallon, Albert Harvey, A J Booth, Eric Crowder, Chris Hitchcock, J Cook, Dave Newbold and Maggie Ryan.

Further donations will be acknowledged in the summer edition of BING.

DEATHS

With sadness I draw members' attention to the passing of the following members:
Gordon Marshfield (Fareham, Hampshire), Dave Spong (Sutton, Surrey), Alex Vaughan (Edinburgh), Jack Hobday (East Ham, London), Ron Gould (Rainham, Essex), Alf Ward (Sheffield, South Yorkshire).

Our sincere condolences to the family and friends.

GOING MY WAY – Bing Crosby and American Culture

This fascinating book is now available from University of Rochester Press and one contributor evinces that the essays "form an intricate collage that captures Crosby at the intersection of so many aspects of American culture". There are many more intriguing observations and you should not miss buying this seminal book. See Keith Parkinson's review in Books 'N' Bing.

MEMBERSHIP

At the time of writing my report (February 16), 180 subscriptions are outstanding. Wig and I will write to invite these members to continue their membership and all we ask is that those paying late this year pay early in 2009. Members who have paid their fees have done so generously and in full support of the new subscription rates. We are grateful that the work of the ICC is acknowledged and supported by so many enthusiastic members.

CALENDAR 2008

Only 15 copies of this much admired production by Ron Bosley remain for sale and it is worth buying the calendar for the rare pictures that Ron has featured. Please write to me if you wish to buy a copy.

LEEDS 2008

Date for your diary is Sunday October 5th.

Until summer, my kindest regards to all members.

Michael Crampton

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2007

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions and donations	9255	Production of BING magazine	9322
Sales - Calendars	2175	Calendars	1906
Leeds meeting - receipts	353	AGM (Leeds) costs	328
Sales – Books	65	Secretarial costs	74
Sales - Jonzo CDs	147	Jonzo CDs	105
Sales - Back issues	105	Editorial costs	55
Bank Interest 2007	7	Postage – back issues	119
		Book postage	25
Bank balance 31/12/2006	9295	Bank balance 31/12/2007	9468
	21402		21402

Note:

1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary and amounts owing and stocks of books and CDs held are not shown. Funds held on a temporary basis by the various international representatives are not shown either.
2. The club is able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2008.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

The Truth About My Dad, Bing Crosby

The Daily Express in the UK carried an article on October 13 last year by Peter Sheridan which included an interview with Mary Crosby.

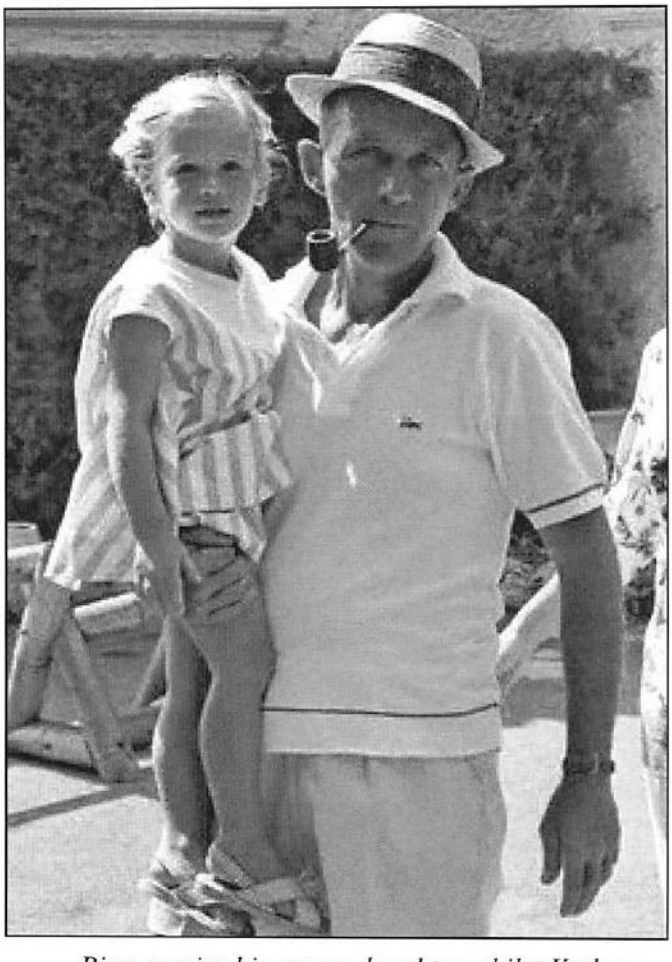
For countless millions he was the warm, fatherly crooner and the dry-witted foil to bumbling Bob Hope in the Road movies. He possessed the most recorded voice in history, selling half a billion records.

But Bing Crosby's mellow image was shattered after his death - 30 years ago tomorrow - when his eldest son Gary accused the Hollywood legend of being a cold, remote and unloving martinet who physically and mentally abused his children.

Now Bing's only daughter, actress Mary Crosby, has had enough. She wants to remove the lasting slur on her late father's reputation.

"Those accusations tainted my father's good name and it's unfair that one angry man can do so much damage," she says.

"It never happened. Yes, my father had difficulty expressing his emotions and he was like a Victorian patriarch: rigid, proper, and very rarely said, 'I love you'. Out walking, it was a big deal if he ever held my hand. But he was a loving and caring father to all his seven children.



Bing carries his young daughter whilst Kathryn and Harry follow.

"He had his faults. He had been a Hollywood megastar throughout his first marriage and he wasn't often there for his first four sons. But he loved them and was never abusive. It's time the world knew the truth."

Mary, 48, whose other claim to fame is that in the Eighties soap *Dallas* she played Kristin - the woman who shot JR in its most watched episode - says of her half-brother: "Gary was one of the angriest people I've ever met. The boys were spanked when they misbehaved but that was common back then; it wasn't physical abuse. I think Gary's perceptions were tainted by his huge anger."

Crosby's sons by his first marriage to singer Dixie Lee - Gary, Phillip, Dennis and Lindsay - suffered his absences as he pursued his career at the expense of fatherhood. "The first four brothers had major problems with alcohol," says Mary. "Their mother Dixie also drank and back then nobody knew it was not good to drink when you were pregnant.

The boys had problems from the start, she goes on. "They were in trouble in school and had difficult childhoods. There was lots of alcohol and lots of drama. I think my father felt some responsibility for that, because he hadn't been there much when they were growing up.

"Dad was deeply saddened by how things turned out for his first family. He felt he made some mistakes and wasn't there for them when he should have been. But his mistake was dedicating himself to his career, not beating his children."

Gary's brother Phillip, who died three years ago, also supported that view: "My dad was not the monster my lying brother said he was. He was strict but he never beat us black and blue and my brother Gary was a vicious, no-good liar for saying so."

"My dad was my hero. I loved him very much. He loved all of us, too, including Gary. He was a great father."

Crosby was one of Hollywood's wealthiest stars with investments in oil, property, horseracing and America's first frozen foods. He had 41 No. 1 hits including 'Swinging On A Star' and 'Pennies From Heaven'. His recording of 'White Christmas' alone sold more than 100 million copies.

When he died aged 74 of a heart attack after a game of golf in Madrid, his £75million fortune was left mostly to his widow, actress Kathryn Grant, and their three children. Bing's four sons from his first marriage were shocked to learn that while their father had provided for them, he also left millions in a trust that they could not touch until they were 80. None lived to enjoy it.

Gary saw it as one last act of cruelty, but Mary says: "The money was left in trust because there were really destructive things going on in their lives. He did that to ensure that they wouldn't blow it all in weeks but had money left for the rest of their lives."

It was not to be. Plagued by alcoholism, two sons

put guns to their heads – Lindsay in 1989 aged 51, apparently after watching his father in *White Christmas* on TV, and Dennis in 1991, aged 54. Gary died, embittered and angry as ever, not long after in 1995, and Phillip in 2004.

Although his first family may have felt they got the worst of Bing, he became a changed man when he married his second wife Kathryn, 23 and 30 years his junior, in 1957. "His second family came when he was almost retired — he was 55 when I was born," says Mary.

"He did everything differently with us. We weren't spoiled. We weren't having Hollywood parties and dinner with Bob Hope every night. My father moved far from Hollywood. He'd be in bed by nine. I don't think poor Daddy had the vaguest idea of what to do with a girl, so he treated me like a boy, teaching me how to hunt, fish and play baseball and golf. He took me hunting in Africa. I shot an impala and a 13ft crocodile. He was thrilled.

"If I kissed him goodnight, he'd pull away. If I hugged him too long, he'd squirm. He'd never give me a compliment — he didn't want me to get a swelled head. But we always knew we were loved."

Mary was 13, living in Mexico as an exchange student, when Bing phoned, his voice shaking, to reveal that he was having a lung removed. He feared he was dying of cancer.

"I'm about to have an operation and I want to ask you a favour," he said. "I want you to come home." Mary recalls: "Of course I'll come home, I told him — then he shocked me by saying 'I'm sorry about the way I acted, but that's just the way I am. I'm not going to change now. But I want you to know I really love you — and I need you now'."

But Bing also vowed to disown Mary if she lived in sin before marriage, which stopped her living with her boyfriend and later first husband until her father died. Today, Mary shares her California home with her second husband of nine years, lawyer Mark Brodka, sons Benjamin, eight, and Christopher, five, plus a coterie of animals.

Mary became famous to millions of British TV viewers as scheming sex siren Kristin Shepard in *Dallas*. "I went from being known as Bing Crosby's daughter to being a trivia answer," she says. "At least now I'm remembered for my work, not just my father."

She was 18 when Bing died. "It was very painful, especially every Christmas when his movies and 'White Christmas' were everywhere. I'd hear him in the supermarket and start to cry. But now Christmas just makes me smile, because I know my dad is going to be all around me again. For many people he still represents Christmas and family values."

Despite the fortune reportedly left in his will, Mary insists Bing was not as wealthy as everyone thought. "He had a great talent for new ideas: he was among the first to invest in frozen foods and he brought tape recording technology over from Germany," she says. "But he got bad business advice and sold his stake in all that. He did well financially but he was a far better singer than businessman.

"When Dad was at his peak he kept only three cents per dollar for every record sold. It was a lousy deal."

Now the Crosby family is going through Bing's master tapes of his music, radio and TV shows, uncovering lost material and restoring forgotten gems.

Kathryn and her three children from his second marriage – Mary and brothers Harry and Nathaniel - now hope to revitalise Bing's legacy with the release of lost recordings, forgotten TV footage and by finally agreeing to license his image for commercial use.

"There's a new generation who could fall in love with Bing Crosby" says Mary.

"We're not looking at him as a gold mine. We hope that people who don't know him will get to, and those who know him will appreciate him in new ways."

Restoring her late father's reputation, however, is even more important to Mary.

"He really did it right the second time around," she says. "He made mistakes in the first marriage and wanted it right the second time around."

She often wears Bing's old clothes, snuggling into a tattered Hawaiian shirt or a worm Madras plaid jacket that is threadbare with age.

"It makes me feel closer to him," she says. "I can still feel his love, gently wrapped around me."

Peter Sheridan

(Editor: My initial reaction to the article was that despite the familiar old negative stuff, overall it was heart-warming and that it showed Mary Crosby to be our kind of person. Mary was however most unhappy with the article and decided to write to us to put the record straight.)

To the International Club Crosby:

This note has a dual purpose.

Dad was fairly leery of the press - so am I. The article with Peter Sheridan is a good example of why. When I was approached by Peter, he assured me over and over that he had NO interest in stirring up old smut from Gary; rather, that this article was strictly to be about Dad and his huge achievements in the world musically and culturally. Needless to say, that is *not* what he chose to write about. In addition to doing exactly what he stressed he wouldn't do, his facts were wrong and I was misquoted. I wouldn't dream of speaking for the 4 boys - I wasn't there. His financial information about the value of Dad's estate did not come from me and is wrong.

It was deeply disturbing to me that I could spend 2 1/2 hours with Mr. Sheridan talking of all the incredible

things that Dad did and the impact that he had on the world of music and his enormous contributions in so many different areas and, yet again, that is what he chose to focus on.

Unlike Ms. Hepburn, it matters very much what they say about us - even if they DO spell our name correctly!

However, it is a part of why we as a family lay low.

After Dad died, Mom was inundated by people wanting to "help" us ... not the kind of help that we needed. She decided to "circle the wagons" and pull her affairs and her family close. It made the most sense to us. My Dad was very much an "under the radar" kind of a guy...deeply, deeply private. It's how we were raised and how we chose to continue after he died. **It's what Dad wanted.** His work was done and who he was is reflected in that work.

Decades have passed and our family has come to realize that, while it was both his style and ours, we did him a disservice by not keeping his name out there and promoting his legacy. So, we are trying to redeem that by reaching out and recognizing all of you who have been doing the work all along - through the web page which Mark Brodka (my husband) was willing to tackle - brilliantly assisted by Judy Schmid - we will try to let you all know what is in the works and get rare footage and tapes (thank you Bob and Arne and Ernest!) for you to enjoy.

We are eternally grateful to all the fan club members and leaders, past and present: Gord Atkinson, friend and fan from Canada; Bob DeFlores, film archivist; Arne Fogel, musician and fan; Malcolm Macfarlane, fan club leader from the UK; George O'Reilly of Ireland, friend and fan; Ernest Sutkowski, my dear friend who has kept me in Dad's music through the years; Wig Wiggins, fan club leader; Steven Lewis, college professor, fan and curator of the 'Bing Crosby Internet museum'... and all our old friends and new that have been *so* fierce in supporting who he was and what he stood for.

You all have been the heroes.

THANK YOU!

Mary Crosby - February 14, 2008

(Editor: Well, what a nice letter and it's great to read that the family wishes to give Bing a more visible image. We will give as much as help as possible and we wish them well in their endeavours. There are several Crosby developments at present as you will read...)

BING CROSBY RADIO TIME ON XM SATELLITE RADIO CHANNEL 4

Bing Crosby Enterprises and XM Satellite Radio have teamed up to air classic Bing Crosby Kraft Music Hall and Philco radio shows as part of their regular Sunday evening programming. The shows began on December 30, 2007, at 7:30pm ET. The classic radio program repeats on Wednesdays at 10pm ET. The Crosby Classic Radio program will run throughout 2008 and will be a feature of "The '40s Channel" – XM Satellite Radio Channel 4.

XM's broadcast will also be available on XM Radio Online (xmro.xmradio.com) and DirecTV (channel 801), and to AOL members through AOL Radio.

Bing is Back!

Film Festival Returns to the NYC Public Library Donnell Center Mar 27-Apr 30

The series' kick-off event on Thursday, March 27, at 6pm includes a digital remastering and presentation by film archivist Bob DeFlores of *High Tor*, which originally aired on CBS in March 1956. Bob will discuss the process of the restoration of this very rare work. Admission to all events is free.

Kathryn Crosby will perform her new "Heroes" cabaret show honoring Bing's support of WWII soldiers at a special engagement at Donnell on Sunday, April 6, 2008, at 2:30pm.

Other films include:

April 2, 2008 at 2:30 PM - WE'RE NOT DRESSING (1934)

April 9, 2008 at 2:30 PM - WAIKIKI WEDDING (1937)

April 16, 2008 at 2:30 PM - DOUBLE OR NOTHING (1937)

April 23, 2008 at 2:30 PM - HERE COME THE WAVES (1944)

April 30, 2008 at 2:30 PM - THE ROAD TO HONG KONG (1962)

Donnell Library Center Auditorium
The New York Public Library
20 West 53rd Street
New York, New York 10019
(212) 621-0609

Vaudeville at the Brooklyn Paramount

A day-long seminar will be held at Long Island University, the site of the Brooklyn Paramount, on April 25th, 2008. This will explore the history of vaudeville at the venerable theater. Martin McQuade has been enlisted to discuss, during the final afternoon session, Bing Crosby and the other singers who appeared there. The morning session promises a screening of Rudy Vallee's never – before seen 1931 home movies taken backstage at the theater. Other participants will include Joe Franklin and Ron Hutchinson of The Vitaphone Project.

Ron Field's bash

The indefatigable Ron has booked Bob DeFlores to present his Bing tribute at the Roxy Theatre, Morton,

Washington on Bing's birthdate - Saturday 3rd. May. Ron himself will be presenting - *Bing Crosby, The Man I Knew*. This is the talk he delivered at Hofstra in 2002. Show times on Saturday 3rd May are at 2.00pm and 7.00pm. Ron got his local timber company to sponsor 75% of the costs and he needs only a few ticket sales to break-even. Nice job, Ron

Barry's 'Bing Day'

Barry Whittingham tells us that there will be another Bing gathering at his home on Saturday 5th May. He hopes that some of you who could not attend last year will be able to come this time. Anyone who would like to come can telephone him at 0115 9134240 or drop him a line to 25c Garton Close, Nottingham NG6 8RZ. Or send an e-mail to barry.whittingham@ntlworld.com

Bing Invoked on the Floor of the US Senate

As reported on "ABC News America This Morning," debate on the Economic Stimulus Package working its tortuous way through Congress contained a statement made on January 31st, 2008 on the floor on the Senate by Mitch McConnell. Likening the unwieldy bill to an overdressed Yuletide tree, the Republican minority leader remarked, "You can almost hear Bing Crosby's voice coming out of the Finance Committee." A trimmed version of the tree was eventually passed into law.

Additional political note: The January 20th, 2008 installment of the pundit roundtable "The McLaughlin Group" featured a fragment of Crosby's recording of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" to underscore a segment on Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee's evangelical stump speeches.

Crosbys in the house

As ever, the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am at Pebble Beach in February brought a tremendous amount of publicity to Bing and the story of how he originally founded the tournament. Bing's son, Harry, continued the family's more than 60-year relationship with the tournament. He was paired with pro J.P. Hayes in the pro-am, with the twosome shooting a third-round, 4-under 68 at Poppy Hills. The foursome was followed by Kathryn Crosby.

Also Kathryn accepted an award in Bing's honor naming him one of the Monterey Peninsula's "Pioneers of Golf" at a private banquet sponsored by the Monterey County Business Council, Saturday evening, February 2, 2008.

To go alongside the tournament, artist Suzanne McCourt presented "Memoirs of the Crosby Clambake," at Phillips Gallery of Fine Art in nearby Carmel. These were new paintings and sketches inspired by the days of the Crosby Clambake golf tournament including letters from Bing, Bob Hope and artist Hank Ketcham. Some of the pictures may still be viewable at www.phillipsgalleries.com.

Bing in the Hit Parade Hall Of Fame

Our votes have inducted Bing into the 2007 Hit Parade Hall of Fame.

In 2006, former senior radio executive, John Rook, grew an idea to honor recording artists from all venues and walks of life with his friend Gil Bateman, a former recording executive. So, in 2007 they asked the world, through the internet, who should be honored.

Amazingly, more than 63,000 votes were cast in 2007 on www.hitparadehalloffame.org from around the world. Fans had over 100 nominees to choose from and the judges have indicated that twenty-eight recording artists will be inducted into the Hit Parade Hall of Fame.

Here are the winners that fans worldwide gave the biggest number of votes. Alphabetically, the 2007 first inductees are: Paul Anka, The Beatles, Tony Bennett, Pat Boone, Beach Boys, Teresa Brewer, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, Chubby Checker, Jimmy Clanton, Nat "King" Cole, Perry Como, Bing Crosby, Bobby Darin, Neil Diamond, Fats Domino, Four Seasons, Aretha Franklin, Connie Francis, Brenda Lee, Johnny Mathis, Ricky Nelson, Roy Orbison, , Elvis Presley, Diana Ross & the Supremes; Neil Sedaka, and Frank Sinatra.

With 18% of all votes coming from outside the United States, Elvis Presley topped all nominees. Fan clubs played a major role in the voting according to the Hit Parade Hall of Fame creators.

"We're thrilled with the response we've had from the public as we are still in our infancy and it appears that our voting numbers will grow as our young organization becomes more widely known," said founders John Rook and Gil Bateman.

The next step beyond the voting is to build a hall of fame bricks and mortar structure. Presently, the organization is speaking with two or three individuals and municipalities as to where to locate the Hit Parade Hall of Fame.

In January of each year voting begins for a new group of nominees. In 2008 the focus will be on three decades beginning in 1950. Each nominee is required to have at least two Top 10 hits, singles or album of any genre. Besides voting for recording stars already nominated, visitors to the Hit Parade Hall of Fame website are also encouraged to suggest the names of future nominees. In the past year, fans gave the nominating committee more than five hundred names to consider.

Once nominated a recording artist has three years to gain enough votes for induction into the Hit Parade Hall of Fame. A total of eighty-two 2007 nominees continue

to vie for votes with sixty-two new nominees joining them in 2008. For more information, please visit www.hitparadehalloffame.org or call John Rook at (208) 664-4014.

Russ Columbo remembered

On January 11th a Russ Columbo centennial celebration was held at "Charley O's" nightclub in Manhattan. The event was produced, written and directed by singer/bandleader Gregory Moore, who also narrated the evening, in which Colombo's story was told through anecdotes and song. Guests included Steve Ross, Peter Mintun, guitarist and author Lenny Kaye ("You Call It Madness: The Sensuous Song of the Croon"), Joe Franklin, and New York radio host Rich Conaty ("The Big Broadcast" on WFUV-FM in New York). Bing Crosby was prominently mentioned, both as a "friendly rival" as well as a pallbearer of Russ Columbo. Moore related that Columbo actually recorded "Where the Blue of the Night" a few weeks before Bing himself. To quote Moore's script, "Although Bing certainly held the title 'King of the Airwaves' in the early thirties, Russ Columbo could actually be called the 'Crown Prince-in-Waiting.'" Moore plans to continue touring throughout 2008 with his tribute, information about which may be found at www.gregorymooreonline.com

Jolly Roger still at work

Roger Osterholm, whose book *Bing Crosby – A Bio-Bibliography* was published by Greenwood Press in 1994 is still promoting Bing. He was invited to speak for an hour on the life of Bing at the January luncheon meeting of the Ponce Inlet Women's Club. That town is near Daytona Beach in Florida. While the 60 members ate, Roger shared the latest CD of Crosby's Christmas music with them. They were all delighted with the presentation.

Feinstein in London!

Michael Feinstein first appeared in the pages of BING magazine in the winter of 2000 (issue #126). He had joined the ICC the previous year and Wig described seeing him perform at Wolf Trap and meeting him afterwards. Michael was the prime mover behind the prestigious Academy of Motion Pictures tribute to Bing in November 2003 which he also hosted. In addition, he led an impressive tribute to Bing and Bob Hope at Carnegie Hall in November 2005.

Michael came to London in January to entertain at the newly renamed *Feinstein's at the Shaw*. As we know, amongst other things, he is the singer, pianist and impresario of the Manhattan supper club *Feinstein's at Loews Regency* in New York and he has now entered into an arrangement to take cabaret artists to the 450-seat Shaw Theatre in London under the name *Feinstein's at the Shaw*. He inaugurated the series himself, with a show called "An American in London" in January and Ken Crossland and your editor had lunch with him during his stay.

First though, some background. Michael was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1956 and after graduating from high school, he worked in local piano bars for two years, moving to Los Angeles when he was 20. Through the widow of legendary concert pianist-actor Oscar Levant, he was introduced to Ira Gershwin, who hired him to catalogue his extensive collection of phonograph records. The assignment led to a six-year musical excavation of Gershwin's home on Beverly Hills' Roxbury Drive, preserving the legacy of not just Ira but his composer brother George, who had died four decades earlier, as well. This extended tenure enabled him to get to know next-door neighbour Rosemary Clooney, with whom he formed an intensely close friendship lasting until Rosie's death.

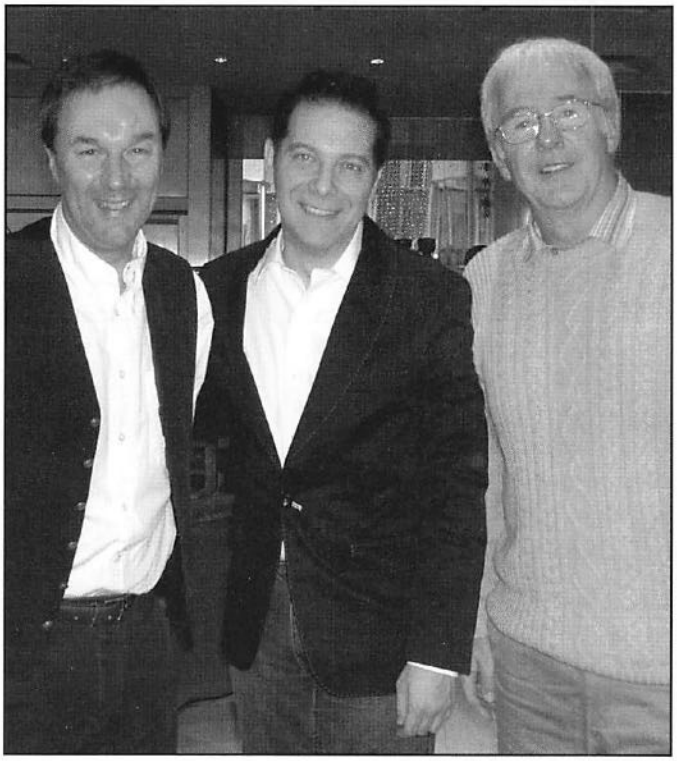
In 1985, he recorded his first CD, *Pure Gershwin*, a collection of music by George and Ira Gershwin. He followed this in quick succession with *Live at the Algonquin* (1986); *Remember*, featuring the music of Irving Berlin; *Isn't It Romantic*, a collection of standards which featured the first time he was backed by an orchestra; and *Over There*, featuring the music of America and Europe during the First World War. Michael then embarked on an ambitious songbook project wherein he would perform the music of a featured composer, accompanied by the composer. These included collaborations with Burton Lane (two volumes), Jule Styne, Jerry Herman, Hugh Martin, Jimmy Webb, Jay Livingston/Ray Evans and two other albums of Gershwin music: "Nice Work if You Can Get It" and "Michael and George."

As Michael is a real devotee of the great American songbook, Ken Crossland had approached him to ask if he would write the foreword to our Perry Como tome. He had readily agreed and arising from that Ken and I duly met him on January 7.

With my usual direct approach, virtually the first words I said to Michael were "Goodness, you look just like your photograph" which isn't always the case when you meet showbiz personalities as often their publicity photos date from twenty years previously. Michael laughed and said, "Oh, I do like to keep my photographs up to date!"

Michael was very friendly and relaxed and the conversation flowed for well over two hours without any of us pausing to take breath. Whilst Michael loves performing, his real passion is in preserving the legacy of America's greatest songwriters, and he recently created the Feinstein Foundation for the Preservation of American Popular Music to do just that. He has a vast collection of sheet music, recordings, films, posters, papers and theatrical memorabilia which he stores in his 10,000-square-foot house in Los Feliz, a district of the

city of Los Angeles. The Tudor-style house was the Russian consulate from 1935 to 1951.



Ken Crossland (left) and Malcolm Macfarlane (right) surround Michael Feinstein.

Members often write to me asking when Michael's planned CD of Bing material is to be issued. The bad news is that it is unlikely to appear as originally intended on the Feinery Records label but the good news is that Michael is determined to find a way to get it released and he is pursuing several ideas at present. He has some rare Bing items including tracks from the Woodbury series that none of us have heard before. He is keen to have the many duets Bing and Rosemary Clooney did with Buddy Cole's accompaniment issued too.

Ken and I were interested to learn a little more about the discovery of the "Poor Little G-string" track a year or two back. Michael had been given access to the basement of Kathryn Crosby's home in Hillsborough and on one tape of miscellaneous items, he came across Bing singing "Poor Little G-String". Further research indicated that the song had been intended for use in the planned MGM film *The March Of Time* and Michael contacted Warner Brothers who own the early MGM titles to see if they could shed any light on it. A search of their archives revealed that there was a recording of 'G-String' but the name of the singer was not mentioned. The description just said "tenor". Well, in fact it was a baritone – Bing! Michael played a full part in getting the 6-CD set "That's Entertainment" issued with 'G-String' on it and he also provided many rare items for the set.

Michael admires many artists but, pleasingly, at the top of his list are Bing and Fred Astaire. He threw a question at us.

"What unissued Bing material would you particularly like to find?"

While Ken and I struggled to find a good answer, Michael said that for him it would be the demo songs that Bing recorded accompanied by George Gershwin on the piano for the proposed Fox film *Delicious* in 1931. We all agreed that that would be a wonderful find. Michael will keep searching.

In reviewing Bing's later career, Michael commented that it was a great shame that Bing had not worked more with people such as Nelson Riddle in the late 1950s as he would have built up a more modern body of work which would still be heard today.

Many years ago, a privately produced EP circulated around selected Crosby collectors and one of the tracks was "Dream A Little Dream Of Me". This was not the 1957 version with Bob Scobey but a slower version with a lush orchestral backing. The source of this track was not disclosed but it was felt that it might be a track recorded for insertion into Bing's GE show but not used. The mystery had never been solved until a few months ago when Ken Barnes was sent a good quality copy by Michael.

Michael confirmed that the track was indeed labelled as having been recorded for the GE show 1953-54 season. The original arrangement is with the John Scott Trotter Collection in Wyoming and the arranger is not Trotter himself but is unknown. There is a note written on the score to Trotter asking if the ascending string figure in the latter part of the chart is "too much." Michael said that the string figure is absolutely beautiful and he was glad that Trotter left it in! It's a great pity that the song was never used on radio at the time.

It was a real treat for us to spend time with such a knowledgeable enthusiast as Michael.

After lunch, Ken and I returned to the British Library to research Perry Como but whilst there, I spotted some Bing references too. Read on!

Malcolm Macfarlane

Jocks, Jukes And Disks

We always like to give a balanced appraisal of Bing and his career rather than a rose-tinted view and the following will confirm this fact. We came across a 1946 review of Bing's latest records by George Frazier of *Variety* magazine. Here's what he said in the October 2, 1946 issue.

It is a sad, thankless, and sometimes presumptuous task to have to report that a champion has slipped up. If the champ happens to be a great one—personally as well as professionally—the task becomes inordinately difficult.

Bing Crosby has become that kind of champ. He has been the non-pareil, the unprocessed cheese kid.

From the days of "Just One More Chance," down through the abundantly talented years, he has been wonderful, with a special kind of purity in his appeal. Of late, though, his seeming disinterest has become more and more apparent, until now it can no longer be ignored.

In the entertainment business, though, you think twice before you criticize an idol, for if it is kind of amusing to say that so-and-so has a clothespin on his nose, it is almost lese majeste to suggest that a Crosby is not what he used to be. But be that as it may, the evidence is too stark. The Groaner, although his manner still has that incomparable kind of relaxation, no longer imparts the verve, the dash of his early disking, and if you think otherwise, listen to his newest releases.

Crosby's "Pretending" and "Gotta Get Me Somebody to Love" (Decca 23661) are so inferior that you are apt to mistrust your own judgment when you hear them for the first time. You are apt to suspect that something is wrong with your phonograph. But you find out it isn't your phonograph at all. Bing is accompanied by Les Paul and his trio (an effective background) and the faces should have been good. Five years ago, they might have been magnificent. Both tunes ("Gotta Get Me" is from *Duel In the Sun*) are the lazy sort of thing which Bing used to do better than anyone else. But he sings them so indifferently that you cannot ignore the gloomy conclusion that Bing has slipped. Sinatra, Haymes, Como, Buddy Clark and a few others are cutting him. If it sounds unduly harsh on him to say this, it would be harsher on the others to keep it quiet.

Crosby's other disk this week is in the nature of a stunt. Jack Kapp, Decca's wily boss, long ago conceived the novelty value of coupling The Groaner with other Decca contractees e.g. the merry Andrews, Louis Jordan, Eddie ("I Hate Publicity") Condon, etc. Now Kapp has Jascha Heifetz fiddling obbligatos to Bing's renditions of "Where My Caravan Has Rested" and "Lullaby" (from "Jocelyn") on Decca 40012. It is not disclosing any military secret to say that Heifetz—even if, on this, he's no Heifetz—takes the honors. Crosby sounds tired, disinterested, and, incidentally, badly advised not to rest his caravan. All this, however, probably will not keep the jukes and jocks from spinning these four faces. As a matter of fact, "Pretending" may prove to be enormously popular.

George Frazier

Well, he didn't hold back did he? *Billboard* magazine commented on the songs with Jascha Heifetz too on October 12, 1946 and they said:

The groaner goes concert with this cutting. And with no less a Strad scratcher than Jascha Heifetz tearing off the obbligatos as well as stringing in a bit of the theme himself, Bing Crosby gives with some real lullabying for both of these standard songs. "Lullaby" from Godard's "Jocelyn" and "Where My Caravan Has Rested" is the classic chant of Herman Lohr and Edward Teschemacher. Victor Young brings up the orchestral background for the desired effect. Crosby crowds will like these better for home spinning.

(Editor: Well, I never have liked the Heifetz tracks particularly but I have always enjoyed the two tracks with Les Paul. Neither of them charted though. Bing was having ups and downs with his voice around this time. But what do members think?)

Happy Holiday!

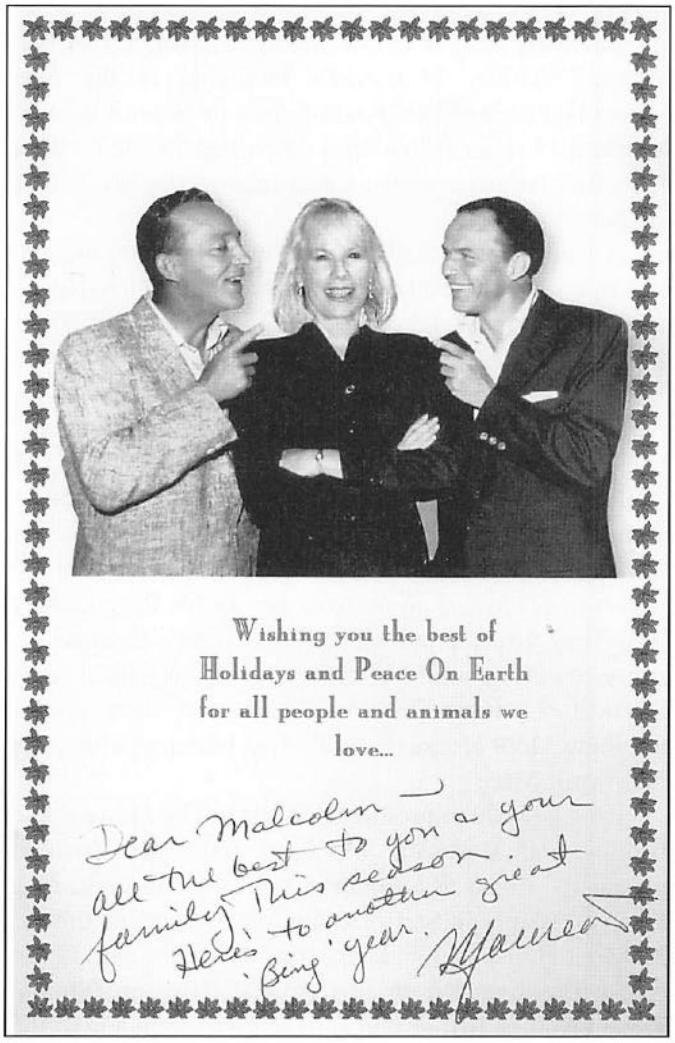
Christmas and the New Year celebrations seem a long way off now but how nice it was during the holidays to have Bing's voice being heard in malls, shops and also on radio stations that don't normally play him.

Your editor receives a number of Christmas cards from members and can I make an omnibus 'thank you' here to all those who sent me greetings. Some of these are very imaginative and one I must mention is that from **Maureen Solomon** of Toluca Lake in California which is shown below.

Maureen annotated a map of Morocco with drawings illustrating the Hope and Crosby adventures there and added her own name to the billing for the film. There was more because when I opened the card, I found Maureen's face superimposed on Rosemary Clooney's

body in between Bing and Frank Sinatra. Very clever – well done, Maureen.

Incidentally, Maureen was seen on *Good Morning America* in February when she was filmed talking about home movies.



Straight down the middle

The Yorkshire Post Magazine of October 13 last year had an article by Paul Kirkwood about Bing's visit to Kirkby Malzeard. The author has kindly given us permission to reproduce it here and I think you'll enjoy it.

The spectators at the Highside playing fields in Kirkby Malzeard shield their eyes from the low evening sun when they should be rubbing them in disbelief.

For there in front of them, padding up before heading to the crease, is Bing Crosby, as incongruous as he is unmistakable in his trademark trilby.

The start of a junior cricket match between Highside and Kirkby Fleetham is delayed as Bing strides into the centre of the pitch.

"How do you hold the bat?" he jokes. "And what do you do with it? Don't send those balls down fast," he adds, hitting the first ball for four. But, to the delight of the spectators he is out, clean-bowled with the second ball and then stays around for an hour or so to sign autographs and chat.

Bing is clean-bowled

The date was Thursday, August 12, 1976 and Bing was on a grouse shooting holiday. He was staying as a guest of Lord of the Manor, Godfrey Bostock, at his home, the Moor House, just a couple of miles south-east of Kirkby Malzeard. The Glorious Twelfth had been just that. Having flown in the day before, Bing had bagged six-and-a-half brace.

A year earlier – when Bing, his wife Kathryn and son Harry had first stayed with Mr Bostock – Bing had donated £1,250 to the Highside Playing Fields Association, of which Mr Bostock was president. The sum included his £250 fee for three appearances on Yorkshire Television's Stars on Sunday, filmed in Leeds.

Keen to see the playing fields for himself, Bing was driven to them by Mr Bostock. Joan Kirk, who still lives in Kirkby Malzeard, was secretary of the Highside Playing Fields Association from 1972 to 1997 and remembers the visit well. "We didn't get much notice," she said. "Mr Bostock rang me in the morning. Word soon got round, though, so there were lots of people on the playing fields when he arrived with Bing in his vintage yellow car at about 6.30.

"My son, Peter, then 21, was umpire for the match which was just about to start and my daughter, Anne, then 18, was beside me. Bing said: 'Is this your daughter? Isn't she like you?' He was a lovely man. We always joke that the pictures we took that day must be the only ones with him in cricket gear. Quite a few celebrities came to shoot up here in those days, including some princes of Denmark, I think."

Bing usually preferred to stay anonymous during his visits and was grateful to the locals for keeping them secret. Joan maintained contact with him after their meeting. In December 1976, she sent him some photos from the cricket match and Bing replied saying: "That playing field of yours has quite a sentimental place in my heart because of the good times I had in that area up there and the marvellous shoots I've had with Mr Bostock." The following April, Joan sent him a letter wishing him well when he was hospitalised after falling 20ft into an orchestra pit during a performance in California. Again Bing sent a prompt reply postmarked "Beverly Hills".

The most cherished memento in Joan's collection, though, is a 33rpm 12-inch record titled Ode to Yorkshire, a limited edition of just three. Bing sent the others to Mr Bostock and Lord and Lady Swinton who were also among his shooting friends. The plain white, typewritten label simply bears the title of the song, a credit to Joey Bushkin (Bing's regular piano accompanist) and the main singing credit to "An unidentified strolling player". "People from his fan club have asked if they could tape the record, but I've preferred them not to as the record is very personal and to tape it would take away some of its uniqueness," said Joan. I was privileged, then, to hear it on her Dansette record player.

Consisting of four passages and lasting more than five minutes, the song is full of whimsy and charm and clearly not something that Bing just bashed off. In the lyrics, he pays tribute to Mr Bostock, Lord and Lady Swinton and numerous other people he met while shooting in Dallowgill – even the beaters.

One of the party, he says, "talks like David Niven", another shoots like Annie Oakley and, to all, he urges "let's get crackin' through the bracken". The final lines are sung to the tune of Rule Britannia: "Hail to Yorkshire and to Dallowgill. If I may come back, I surely will."

Sadly, Bing never had the opportunity. Aged 74 and just 14 months after his famous innings, he died of a heart attack having just completed a round of golf in Madrid. "He was unassuming, charming and a great gentleman in every sense of the word," said Mr Bostock at the time. "He loved the country around here and made friends among the local people. He really enjoyed his visits and used his return visit to revive friendships."

Joan sent a letter of condolence to Bing's widow, Kathryn, who replied with two verses from 'That's What Life is All About', a reflective song that Bing had recorded in his 70s as his equivalent to Sinatra's 'My Way'.

The Bing story does not end there, though. In 1994, to mark Kirkby Malzeard's inclusion in the new Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Area of Natural Beauty, Joan and 15 other ladies from the village created a 9ft x 6ft textile banner which today hangs in the Mechanics Institute.

If you look carefully, below the gala marquee and beside a set of cricket stumps, a bat and ball is Bing's head, wearing a white cloth cap and smoking a pipe. In the corner of a banner, in a corner of Yorkshire, Bing will forever have a presence, and one as discreet as his visits to Nidderdale – with the exception of that unforgettable evening in the summer of '76.

A star turn at The Drovers...

The traditional and unassuming Drovers Inn near the hamlet of Dallow is an unlikely mecca for Bing Crosby fans. They visit the pub since it was Bing's local on his grouse shooting holidays. In fact, it was very local since his host, Godfrey Bostock, lived next door at the adjoining Moor House. He still owns both properties and Dallowgill Moor.

Bing gave an impromptu concert in The Drovers one evening and also sang for Lord and Lady Swinton around the piano at Swinton Castle. Mr Bostock, now 92, lives mainly in Staffordshire but still spends time at the Moor House and, indeed, came up for the start of the grouse shooting season this August. His son, Simon, lives in Pateley Bridge and is the current president of the Highside Playing Fields Association.

A great way to explore Dallowgill on foot – and an excuse to call in at The Drovers – is the Mosaic Trail which celebrates its 10th anniversary next month. For more information and the route, see http://tinyurl.com/ypt3tv or buy a leaflet for 25p from the village stores in Kirkby Malzeard.

Paul Kirkwood

This is Bing Crosby For....

A look back at Bing's Public Service and Promotional Recordings by Greg Van Beek

Bing Crosby donated his time and talents unselfishly throughout his long career to bring awareness to, and raise millions of dollars for, many different charitable organizations and causes. So much of what he did went unnoticed and undocumented, as Bing was indeed a very private man in this regard.

Much of what he did was in the form of making special recordings, be it records to be sold for the benefit of a certain organization or business, or brief recordings made for radio broadcast typically referred to as PSA's or Public Service Announcements. Bing recorded literally dozens and dozens of these PSA's over the decades, so many that it's virtually impossible to track down and trace them all conclusively. I've taken the first step at rectifying this and documenting as many of these promotional and public service recordings that I could find. The list should by no means be considered complete; however it represents a good cross-section of the many varied activities for which Bing was involved.

No attempt was made to document the many recordings of songs, interviews, radio spots, etc. that were issued by the various film studios promoting movies in which Bing starred, however. The sole exception being one record listed below in which Bing promotes a film that he had nothing to do with, and for a competing studio yet!

Some of these recordings will be very familiar, while others will come as a bit of a surprise. I think you'll agree when taken as a whole, it's a sizable and impressive lot. I'd encourage members to submit details of any other recordings of this type you may have in your collections to either Malcolm or myself. Additions will be published in future editions of BING. Here, then, is the list, in chronological order:

1935

10" 78 rpm, Decca Records, #1A "Silent Night / Adeste Fideles / Lift Up Your Hearts / Stabat Mater". Made and distributed for the benefit of the St. Columban Missionary Society.

1938

10" 78 rpm, Decca Records #1887 "Alexander's Ragtime Band / Home on The Range" - with introduction by Eddie Cantor. For the benefit of the National Foundation Against Infantile Paralysis

1942

10" 78 rpm, Treasury Dept. #G-3169-P War Savings Staff Radio Recording "I'm Saving a Dime out of Every Dollar" to benefit the sale of war bonds

10" 78rpm recorded in June, 1942 "Junk Ain't Junk No More" to benefit the war scrap metal drive

1943

12" 78 rpm, Allied Record Mfg. Co. #G-4050, Treasury Dept., War Finance Division Radio Recording to be used during the Third War Loan Drive, September 9-30th "The Road To Victory", Bing Crosby with Gordon Jenkins & his orchestra

1944

10" 78 rpm, Decca Private Pressing, #TL-152A, "Song of The Fifth Marines", made to help boost the morale of the 5th division of the Marine Corps.

1945

10" 78 rpm private recording "The Seventh Air Force", made to help boost the morale of the 7th Division of the Air Force

10" 78 rpm, single-sided, Decca #L3746, "Why Do I Like You?" Made to benefit St. John's Hospital, Santa Monica, CA. Only 1000 copies were pressed on unbreakable vinyl.

12" 78 rpm, Allied Record Mfg. Co. #G-9252, Treasury Dept. War Finance Division. For theater lobby & intermission use. "Buy Buy Bonds", starring Bing Crosby with Harry James' Orchestra. Made to benefit the sales of war bonds.

12" 78 rpm, Allied Record Mfg. Co. # RR-12448, Official Victory Loan Song for intermission and lobby use. "We've Got Another Bond To Buy", sung by Bing Crosby & the U.S. Maritime Service Training Station Choir from Avalon, CA. Made to help promote the continued sale of war bonds

1947

10" 78 rpm (side A) / 33 1/3 rpm (side B), pressed on red plastic. "A Personal Message To You From Bing Crosby" about the newest 20th Century Fox Technicolor Triumph *Mother Wore Tights* with Betty Grable and Dan Dailey. Bing sings a brief a capella excerpt of "There's No Business Like Show Business" during his promotional talk for this Fox musical that had nothing to do with him!

Late 1940's

12" 78 rpm, single sided. Private Edition Record No. 1. "Home Sweet Home" by Bing Crosby accompanied by Victor Young and his Orchestra with the compliments of Better Homes & Gardens (magazine) to remind you that There's No "Market" Place Like Home.

1949

6" 78rpm cardboard backed, single-sided record "An Important Message From Bing Crosby". Made as a preview of the 1949 Philco radio/phonograph line-up.

Early 1950's

12" 78 rpm pressed on clear maroon colored vinyl (along with 2 more records in an album labeled: "Volume 1 Dental Health Record Series - in the interest of child health"). Produced by Southern California State Dental Association and distributed by American Dental Association, 222 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL. Bing's record, #SCSDA-1, Dental Health Presentation No. 1 - Bing Crosby, (one side, backed with a presentation by Robert Taylor on side 2). Other performers featured on the other two records include Amos 'n' Andy, Bob Hope, and Tony Martin. Made to assist in all health education programs for the schools, parent-teacher associations, and other public-spirited service groups in order to promote dental health in children.

10" 33 1/3 rpm, one-sided, pressed on clear maroon vinyl. Allied Record Mfg. Co. Bing Crosby Spots. Made for the Tournament of Champions Benefit Tennis Matches. Record features four Public Service Announcements by Bing.

1952

12" 78 rpm, #XT-11650 United States Marine Corps Reserve. Toys For Tots. One-sided. Features two Public Service Announcements, one by Bing and the other by Bob Hope to promote the donation of toys for Christmas presents to under privileged children.

1953

10" 78 rpm. Quality Records #TJV-CROSBY-1. Gary Crosby & Friend Discuss Pop's New Book "Call Me Lucky". Features two 60 second radio spots with Bing and Gary promoting Bing's new autobiography for the benefit of Simon & Schuster. Was shipped to radio stations with a letter from Bing dated October 15, 1953.

Mid 1950's

12" 33 1/3 rpm, Sound Studios Disc #NM9E-5000 Florsheim Shoe Spots. Features four promotional PSA's by Bing to promote the sale of shoes.

7" 45 rpm. RCA/Victor #G8-OH-9809 Air Lines Transcribed. A.M.I. Spots. Features 15 PSA's, including one 25 seconds in length by Bing, to raise funds for the American Museum of Immigration at the Statue of Liberty.

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP produced by Fletcher Richards, Calkins, & Holden, Inc. NY # EBC62-8460 Religious Overseas Aid Program – Protestant, Catholic, Jewish. Bing Crosby – Bob Hope – Ken Carpenter "The Road To Help". 15 minute program sent to radio stations to raise awareness and funds for religious aid. Bing sings "Road To Morocco" with Hope, "Dear Hearts And Gentle People", "You Are My Sunshine" and "Sweet Leilani".

1956

12" 33 1/3 rpm, Mary Knoll / World Horizon #MK 1001 "Sunday In Hollywood" with Bing Crosby and Ann Blyth for the benefit of Catholic Charities.

1957

Postcard sized cardboard 78 rpm. Manufactured by Bing Crosby Phonocards, Inc. NY. Front reads "Hi Folks! Dreaming of a White Christmas. Put this record on any 78rpm record player and let me tell you how to make it a real White Christmas...and a merry one! (signed) Bing." Bing appears in the famous cover pose from his Decca "Merry Christmas" 12" LP with Santa hat and holly-leaf bow tie. Bing sings a parody of "Swinging On A Star" accompanied by Buddy Cole to promote the sale of gas appliances.

12" 33 1/3 rpm "Calling All Hearts" program for the American Heart Association

Late 1950's

7" 33 1/3 rpm #NO8Q-4257 Christmas Party. Bing Crosby and The Lennon Sisters promote subscriptions to Country Beautiful Magazine from Elm Grove, WI in this 15 minute long record.

1958

7" 45 rpm. Produced by Crosby Records, Inc. NY. Bing Sings "How Lovely Is Christmas" and "Never Be Afraid" in this promotional record for Crowley's Milk Co.

1959

6" diameter 33 1/3 rpm paper record which appeared in LIFE or LOOK magazine. Manufactured by Columbia Records "Auravision" process. "The Adjustable Remington Roll-A-Matic Shaver presents Music To Shave By featuring Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong,

Rosemary Clooney and The Hi Lo's". Each sings a parody of a popular song to promote this revolutionary new electric razor.

Two 12" 33 1/3 rpm records. Empire #59-7561 / 7562 / 7563 1959 Bishop's Appeal presents Bing Crosby with an assist by Ken Carpenter and the music of John Scott Trotter and Buddy Cole. Each of the three sides runs 30 minutes. These records were sent to radio stations for broadcast to raise money for Catholic Charities. "Bing, Hope & Charity", heard on #59-7563, is a PSA by Bing and Bob Hope for Catholic Charities.

1961

12" 33 1/3 rpm pressed on clear red vinyl. #ET-1 Program One. American Heart Association 1961 Heart Fund Campaign, February 1-28. Calling All Hearts starring Bing Crosby and Bob Hope. A 15 minute syndicated program to benefit the heart fund.

7" 45 rpm Sound Disc #47M-69471 Songs For Selling Fels by Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney with Ken Carpenter. Made to promote the sale of Fels Detergent, one of the sponsors of the Crosby-Clooney Show.

7" 33 1/3 rpm # EP 1054 Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney Sing for Eastern Products Corporation. CBS Radio Coast To Coast Monday Thru Friday. Made to promote the sale of Eastern Draperies, one of the sponsors of the Crosby-Clooney Show.

1963

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP 20th Century Fox TFM3106 "My Favorite Story". Bing is emcee on this album with a variety of stars telling their favorite story or joke for the benefit of the Motion Picture Relief Fund.

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP United Nations UNS-1 All Star Festival. Bing and Louis Armstrong contribute "Lazy River" to this album by a variety of artists to promote the United Nations.

7" 45 rpm Cazenovia College Alumni Association, Cazenovia, NY. Bing sings a parody of "High Hopes", accompanied by Jimmy Van Heusen on piano on this record for the 1963-64 college Alumni Drive Campaign. Van Heusen graduated from Cazenovia in the class of 1931, and is co-chairman for the fund-raising drive. Suzanne Agnew Elliott also is heard on this record.

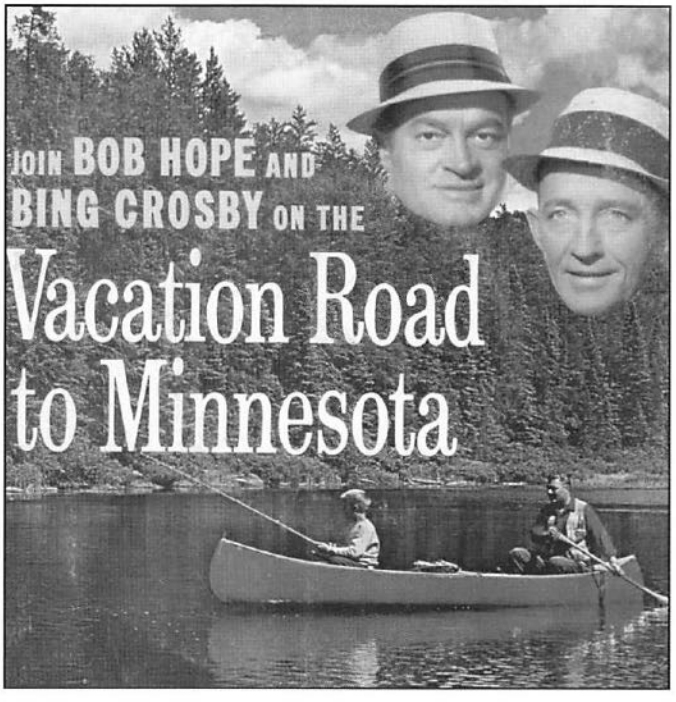
7" 33 1/3 rpm Produced by Optimist International #P4LH-8814 Youth Appreciation Week, November 11-17, 1963. Bing contributes two PSA's on this record with 9 spots total for the promotion of an appreciation week for the youth of America.

1964

7" 45 rpm Bing contributes a PSA for California Safe Driving.

Mid 1960's

7" 33 1/3 rpm Capitol Custom #MB-2263/2264, with picture sleeve. "Vacation Road To Minnesota" starring Bing and Bob Hope with original music composed and conducted by Les Baxter. Bing and Bob appear on this record to promote tourism in Minnesota.



7" 33 1/3 rpm produced by Pacific Northwest Bell. "Holiday In Washington - The Sounds of the Fabulous Pacific Northwest". Bing lends his voice in narration, along with Martha Wright and Patrice Munsel in this record to promote tourism in Washington state.

7" 33 1/3 rpm produced by Pacific Northwest Bell. "Holiday In Oregon - The Sounds of the Fabulous Pacific Northwest". Similar to the preceding record, with Bing lending his voice along with Mel Blanc and Jane Powell to promote tourism in the state of Oregon.

1965

7" 33 1/3 rpm paper (later thin vinyl) record The Longines Symphonette Society Presents A Personal Message From Bing Crosby. Record sent via mail to the public to promote the sale of Bing's Longines Symphonette Society six LP Treasury of "The Songs I Love". There also was a contest from the Bank Americard credit card company in which "Bing Crosby invites you to find out if you have already won $100 a

month for life", and also to invite the public to accept a free record album of some of Bing's vintage Decca recordings titled "Bing Crosby's All-Time Hit Parade".

1966

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP # CPM 12-2548 Army of Stars for the Salvation Army. Bing hosts this 1966 Christmas program on record to promote donations to the Salvation Army Red Kettle Drive.

1967

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP pressed by Decca # MG 201, 401 Christmas Seal Campaign, 1967. Bing contributes a 51 second long PSA among the 25 spots by various stars to promote the sale of Christmas Seals stamps.

Late 1960's

7" 33 1/3 rpm #CO 4000 PSA's National Hunting & Fishing Day Shooting Safety – Conservation. From the National Shooting Sports Foundation, Riverside, CT. There are 19 brief PSA spots on this record, with Bing contributing a 60 second spot to promote shooting and hunting safety.

1968

7" 33 1/3 rpm #168-USA 1054 (complete with studio announcer) / 1055 (open to allow local announcer to interview the stars). Famous American Stars Series Presents a "Special Featurette" based on The Hollywood Palace (presented Saturday nights on the ABC television network). With Dick Strout, Hollywood commentator. Released simultaneously by Garrison System, Inc. Beverly Hills. The stars of the January 13, 1968 episode of The Hollywood Palace (Bing Crosby, Milton Berle, Peggy Lee, Jimmy Durante, and Phil Harris) are each briefly interviewed on this seven-minute record to promote the 5th anniversary of the show, and its move back to Saturday nights on ABC.

1969

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP #ET-3 American Heart Association "Heart Sunday" Spots. 1969 Heart Fund – February. This record features 38 PSA's by a variety of artists to promote Heart Awareness month. Bing has a 30 second long PSA on side 2.

12" 33 1/3 rpm one-sided LP #69-4910 Presenting Bing Crosby. Plain sleeve with a faux letter signed by Bing that reads "Please take a few moments and listen to this most important message. (signed, Bing Crosby)". Bing recorded this 10 minute message for the benefit of St. Francis, a Catholic High School in La Quinta, CA to raise funds for a new school gymnasium. It was hoped to raise $500,000.

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP #AAVP 23427 American Legion 50th Anniversary Radio Announcements. Bing recorded two PSA's (10 and 20 seconds) out of the twenty included on this album to promote awareness and fund raising for the American Legion, 1919-1969.

7" 33 1/3 rpm with picture sleeve. #AAVP 24040 1969 American Legion 50th Anniversary Campaign, 1919-1969. The second 50 years of the American Legion Public Service Radio Announcements. Bing contributes one 45 second long PSA among the 5 included by others including Clint Walker and President Nixon to promote awareness and fund raising for the American Legion. Side one is the American Legion March by Meredith Willson.

1971

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP #AAVP 27186 Reach Out The Future Is In Your Hands. The American Legion Public Service Radio Announcements. Bing has a 30 second spot among the 20 spots by various artists to promote awareness and fund raising for the American Legion.

1972

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP sent out to radio stations with Bing's photo on the envelope, identifying him as the 1972 National Campaign Chairman of the Arthritis Foundation. The record was chock-full of PSA's on both sides, six spots per side. They are titled (with running times indicated in seconds in parenthesis) "Painful Subject" (60), "Front Door" (60, with Kathryn and Bing), "Word To Women" (30, featuring Kathryn), "Someone Close" (30), "Everyone's Help" (30), "17 Million" (20). Side two features "On The Air" (60, with an excerpt of Where the Blue of the Night), "Families" (30), "Children" (30), "Front Door" (30), "No. 1 Crippler" (20) and "It Hurts: I Know" (20), which is Bing's most telling spot concerning his own plight with arthritis. See footnote to this article for more on Bing's work as the 1972 Campaign Chairman.

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP B/J 202 Christmas Star. Bing recorded two songs, "Christmas Star" and "We Love Old St. Mary's" with the Old St. Mary's choir for the benefit of St. Mary's Church in San Francisco. One thousand copies of the album were pressed and sold directly at the church on California Street. It has subsequently been transferred to CD and is still being sold at the church, and still raising funds, some 35 years after Bing recorded his songs.

1973

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP #72381 A Bing Crosby Christmas For Today's Army. Bing narrates two fifteen-minute Christmas shows featuring recordings from his "A Time To Be Jolly" album on the first record of this two-LP set, produced to promote awareness of and raise funds for the Army.

1974

10" 33 1/3 rpm, one-sided LP. #CO6670 National Shooting Sports Foundation Public Service Announcements for Shooting Safety and Conservation. Bing contributes a 45 second spot among the 16 other spots by various artists to promote shooting safety.

1975

7" 33 1/3 rpm one sided thin vinyl disc issued by World Records #SFI 303 titled "The Very Best of Bing". This record is narrated by veteran BBC broadcaster Alan Dell, and was used to promote the release of World Records' seven LP box set titled "The Very Best of

Bing". Bing contributes to the record, ruminating about the various other singers he duetted with during his Decca days.

1976

7" 45 rpm #AVS-NWF-76 Bing Crosby for the National Wildlife Federation, Washington D.C. 20036. Features five PSA's from Bing to promote the preservation of America's wetlands. The PSA's are as follows: :60 Wetlands Are Productive, :30 National Wetland, :30 Wetlands are Threatened, :20 Tidal Flat, :10 Save Our Wetlands.

1977

7" 33 1/3 rpm Evatone Soundsheet (paper thin opaque vinyl). Presented by Kraft to promote Bing's March 20, 1977 CBS-TV special. Features excerpts from Bing's radio shows.

7" 45 rpm Warner Bros. #PRO 701 United States Marine Corps Toys For Tots 1977 radio PSA spots. Bing recorded a twelve-second Christmas message promoting the donation of toys for Christmas presents to under privileged children just prior to his death.

12" 33 1/3 rpm LP United Artists #UAG 30142 "Joe Bushkin Celebrates 100 Years of Recorded Sound". Bing recorded "Now You Has Jazz" and "Sail Away From Norway" with Joe Bushkin's Jazz Quartet ten days prior to his death for this album, which was a benefit for the Norwegian Red Cross.

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More about Bing's tenure as the 1972 National Campaign Chairman for the Arthritis Foundation

Bing signed on to be the 1972 spokesman on January 12th of that year. No doubt he was persuaded to do so because of his own battles with arthritis, which began sometime in the 1960's, around the time of his bouts with bursitis. His efforts led to a very successful, record-setting campaign total, further bolstered by President Nixon and the Congress proclaiming May as the National Arthritis Month.

Bing filmed at least five different promo spots for television that aired throughout 1972. These 16mm color films were sent to TV affiliates in little three-inch by three-inch boxes, labeled "Arthritis 1972 Spot featuring Bing Crosby, National Campaign Chairman". Judging by the numbering system on the boxes, it appears that Bing may have filmed as many as eight different spots. An ambitious project for Bing, to be sure, as each spot was filmed in a different location, with Bing in a different wardrobe. A few of these were filmed on the grounds of and inside Bing's home in Hillsborough, California.

One of these promo's, a 30-second spot featuring Bing on a golf course holding a club in his hand, is included as a bonus feature of the 2003 Hart Sharp DVD release of "Happy Holiday's With Bing & Frank", the 1957 Frank Sinatra Christmas show with Bing as guest. The other TV PSA's include a 30-second spot titled "Backstage", featuring Bing in suit and tie leaning against a director's chair on the stage of (presumably) a TV show set, which is being constructed behind him.

The two TV PSA's which I've seen that were filmed on location at the Crosby home in Hillsborough include a 60-second spot appropriately titled "At Home", featuring Bing and Kathryn seated on the sofa in the library. Bing is extolling the virtues of giving a donation to the Arthritis Foundation, all the while Kathryn is writing a check from her checkbook, which she tears out and hands to Bing. A color photograph from this filming can be seen on page 212 of Kathryn Crosby's book "My Last Years With Bing". The other, a 30-second spot titled "Front Door", was, as the title indicates, filmed at the front door of the Crosby home. Bing rings the doorbell, and Kathryn comes to the door. As Bing tries to 'put the bite on her' for a donation, Kathryn begins finishing Bing's sentences. She apparently knows as much, if not more, about the arthritis fund, its plight and statistics as does Bing, leading him the exasperate "That's what I was going to say!"

In the final TV PSA, a 60 second spot titled "Boy & Dog", Bing does not appear on camera, but does a voice over as a young boy frolics outdoors with a dog on screen.

As one can plainly see, Bing donated his time and talents to a wide and varied group of charities and organizations. His stint as the 1972 National Campaign Chairman for the Arthritis Foundation was certainly among his most visible, and most successful.

Greg Van Beek

(Editor: Greg has really come up with something new here and it's amazing just how much Bing did in this field. Please let us know about any other similar recordings or films. There must be a lot more out there.

Greg sent us details of an event he attended in February in his locality too.)

I was at an event this morning at the Sheboygan,

Wisconsin Historical Society that saluted music of the 40's and 50's. The local DJ from that area, David Hendrickson, had a nice display of albums (CD's) including many of Bing's in his radio station booth. He also was running the Edsel show on a continuous video loop all day, and it was nice to see folks stopping by, and sitting in the chairs in front of the monitor, enjoying the show. The highlight of the morning was meeting Carol Buschmann, one of the original Chordettes, from "Mr. Sandman" and "Lollipop" vocal group fame. The Chordettes were from Sheboygan, WI. I gave her a CD of Bing and Lindsay's recording of "Mr. Sandman", taken from Bing's own August 15, 1955 NBC reference recording acetate, and she seemed pleased by this, mentioning that after Bing heard the Chordettes singing "Alice Blue Gown" on the Arthur Godfrey show, he sent each of them a nice letter, saying how much he enjoyed the song and their performance, and sending good wishes along for "good 'ol Art". Typical of Bing's kindness towards new performers he enjoyed.

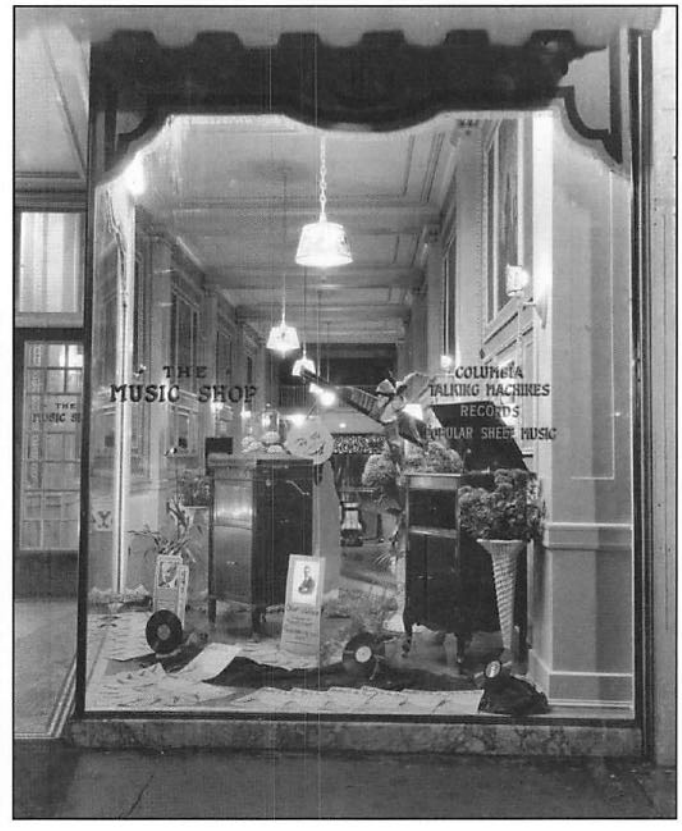
Greg Van Beek

If These Walls Could Talk

Mark Scrimger, former president of Club Crosby, wrote an interesting article for the June, 2007 edition of IN THE GROOVE, the monthly magazine of the Michigan Antique Phonograph Society. The Society has kindly given us permission to share it with our readers too.

The photograph of The Music Shop reproduced alongside is a rare view of a 1920s era music store. As you can see from the front display window, it featured a full line of phonographs, 78 rpm records, and all the latest sheet music hits. These items were the stock and trade of the typical music store of this era. However, looks can sometimes be deceiving and this establishment is anything but typical. You might be surprised to learn that this particular shop holds a rather unique place in popular music history.

The Music Shop, owned by Russ Bailey, was located on bustling Riverside Avenue in downtown Spokane, Washington. Bailey's (as it was known to the locals) was a mecca for the city's musicians and music lovers looking for the newest releases. A group of local lads from North Central High School, who were in the process of forming a small dance band, were frequent visitors. It seemed that the only obstacle blocking their path to fame and fortune (i.e. paying engagements) was their lack of a percussionist to keep the beat. Fortunately, their leader and piano player, Al Rinker, had heard about a guy who lived on the east side of town who had been the drummer in a recently disbanded college pick-up band. He even owned his own trap set which he had purchased from the Sears, Roebuck catalogue. It was also rumored that he could be cajoled into singing an occasional vocal refrain through his tiny hand-held megaphone. After a brief audition, the group decided to ask Harry Crosby to join. He insisted they not be so formal and call him "Bing" like everyone else (except his mother).



The band members were enthusiastic but lacked sufficient capital to purchase the stock dance band arrangements they needed from Bailey's Music Shop. However, it turned out that Al Rinker had a keen musical ear, and was able to play almost any tune on the piano after hearing it only a couple of times. So the plan was to have Al gather up the latest recordings off the shelves at Bailey's and then he and the rest of the band would all crowd into one of the small listening rooms to try and memorize the tunes with repeated playings. Then, they would rush back to Rinker's house so that Al could pick out and teach everyone their parts on his piano while the music was still fresh in their minds. A particularly tricky tune might require this procedure to be repeated multiple times. Ralph "Skinny" Goodhue, the young store manager, soon figured out what was going on but, thankfully for musical history, he decided to turn a blind eye and only shooed them out after several hours of freeloading. Occasionally they would repay their friend's goodwill by actually purchasing a record or two.

After several months of practice and practically camping out at Bailey's, they felt they had a sufficient repertoire for their band, The Musicaladers (musical-ladders), to seek gainful employment. Not playing stock arrangements like all the other bands in town turned out to be a blessing. Because the songs they played sounded more like the actual records, they were a novelty in

Spokane and this uniqueness quickly landed them a steady job at the Casino Theatre. Bing Crosby always marked this engagement in 1924 as a turning point in his life. Because he found he was making more money as a band member - surprisingly, even more than the lawyer who employed him during the day as an office clerk - he soon decided to give up his law studies at Gonzaga College to concentrate fulltime on a career in show business. Bing, of course, went on to achieve worldwide fame in all phases of the entertainment industry and became Spokane's favorite son. In his 1953 autobiography, he gave much credit for his early success to the education in popular music he received during the hours he spent in Bailey's listening rooms. At this point, Paul Harvey, the radio commentator, would intone that now you know the rest of the story. But wait, there's more!

Al Rinker had an older sister named Mildred who also liked to sing and briefly had a job demonstrating sheet music. She tried to find employment around the Spokane area but with little financial success. With the prohibition era now in full swing, she decided to leave town and try her luck in the speakeasies in Los Angeles, California. She was correct in her assumption that her style of blues and jazz singing would be much appreciated by nightclub audiences down there. At this time, with the change of scenery, she deemed that a name change was also in order. She decided on the stage name of "Mildred Bailey" - her new last name taken from her hometown music store, Bailey! Mildred became the premiere female jazz singer of the early 1930s and was hired by Paul Whiteman as the first regular female band singer. In this she was a trailblazer and an inspiration for a host of female vocalists who followed her during the big band era and beyond, much the same as Bing Crosby set the benchmark for the majority of male pop singers who came along during this same period. So I feel it's not a stretch to say that, without Bailey's Music Shop, the face of popular music would have been dramatically different. A typical music store? Certainly not!

A Footnote

The Musicaladers disbanded in the spring of 1925 when most of the members had graduated from high school and started making plans to go off to college. Al Rinker and Bing Crosby decided to carry on as a duo and they found decent paying jobs performing in restaurants and theaters around town. However, they soon came to realize that their options for making it big in show business were very limited if they stayed in Spokane, so in late-October of 1925 they bought and fixed up the 1916 Model T that had been used as the band car and headed south to Los Angeles to hook up with Al's sister, Mildred Bailey, who was already performing in clubs down there. She welcomed them with open arms and soon found them jobs touring with a vaudeville troupe up and down the California coast. Their act was billed as "Two Boys And A Piano — Singing Songs In Their Own Way". Less than a year later, Paul Whiteman (on tour out west) caught their act and signed them on as vocalists with his orchestra. Early in 1927 he added Harry Barris to form Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys and the rest is show business history.

Bing never forgot the kindness and support Mildred Bailey showed to him and her brother, Al, upon their unannounced arrival in Los Angeles, and years later when Mildred was hospitalized with severe health problems, he picked up the entire tab — no questions asked.

Mark Scrimger

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $16.00 US each which includes postage. With the strengthening of the Canadian currency against the US dollar, Canadian purchasers should now pay CAN $16.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £10 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal price. Also, there are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

Keith Home, Harrow, Middlesex, UK

Keith has 400 Bing CDs to dispose of and would like them to go to a Crosby admirer. Anyone interested should contact Keith on 0208 723 5804.

John Marshall, 39 Kings Rd., Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0QD, UK (e-mail: carson1812@blueyonder.co.uk)

John has added to his series of Crosby DVDs available and can now offer:

1. Mississippi / Two For Tonight 2. Dr. Rhythm / Sing You Sinners. Each DVD contains two films, as shown and is available for £10 (including postage). The films have been professionally converted from NTSC to PAL for UK viewers.

Also John has reduced the price of the six volumes of his "Footloose Follies" DVDs to £10 each (including postage). See BING 147 for further details.

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs, contact Ray.

Redmond Nostalgia Company, P O Box 82, Redmond, WA 98073-0082, USA. (Tel: (425) 774-1819, Fax (425) 774-8076, web site: http://www.redmondnostalgia.com/

e-mail: redmondnostalgia@aol.com)

David Kiner offers a comprehensive list of 398 Bing Crosby CDs. Each CD is one hour long containing two 30 minute radio programs, unless otherwise noted. All programs have been professionally re-mastered for excellent sound quality. All CDs are professionally printed and come sealed in cases with printed inserts.

See the company's web site for details of what is available.

Stan Woodford, 6 Mariam Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex, RM12 6QA, UK (tel. 01708 445049)

Stan has on offer many VHS (UK format) video items and film song compilations of Bing that may be of interest. SAE for lists please.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) http://www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for imported CDs from the UK and elsewhere.

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Bing featured in a new Trading Card set

We received this press release back in January.

ARLINGTON, TX – JAN. 30, 2008 – Sports legends aren't all you'll find in your packs of trading cards this year as Donruss taps into the world of Hollywood and pop culture to create a one-of-a-kind card set that captures the flavor of America's rich and storied show biz history. Over 100 personalities are featured in Donruss Americana with more than 50 signing autographs and contributing memorabilia to the unique

product. The eclectic group of personalities which come from the worlds of sports, entertainment, politics and history include: Burt Reynolds, Larry King, Debbie Reynolds, Buzz Aldrin, Willie Mays, Lou Gehrig and Jim Courier.

Perhaps no collectible set called 'Americana' would be complete without Bing Crosby featured in it. The Hollywood Legends Materials Silver Screens subset includes one of the rarest Bing Crosby cards in the entire set with only 25 in existence. Other Bing Crosby cards can be found in the Hollywood Legends and Golden Era subsets.

Donruss Americana reached hobby shops on January 4. Each 5-card pack sells for $40 and guarantees collectors either one autograph or memorabilia card in each pack. For more information visit your local hobby shop or www.Donruss.com.

Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 426 Park Place Drive, Petaluma, California 94954-6647, USA (tel. [707] 762-5570 - e-mail bingsfriends81@sbcglobal.net –

website: http://bingsfriendsandcollectors.org/crosbyhomeindex.html

Regular newsletters are issued.

The Australian Bing Crosby Club

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

The society has recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and it still has thirteen of the original members extant. Regular newsletters are issued and the society holds frequent film nights.

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

www.mcckc.edu/~crosby

A wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

www.BingCrosby.com

This site has been launched under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows and a great clip from *Rhythm On The River* amongst others.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/crissi_n/bing.html

This is a most impressive web site maintained by our member, Crissi Newton. Well worth a look.

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698

e-mail: gerry@stonestreet13.freeserve.co.uk,

website: www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune) Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £18 for the UK, £22 for Europe and £32.50 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: editor@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus picture pages, CD reviews, readers' letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A "*must*" for 78 rpm collectors

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK (Tel: 01594 842991)

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A

Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

(web site: http://www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html)

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/ - see also http://www.mikescaife.btinternet.co.uk/ for Mike Scaife's Scottish branch website)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email:tony@flias.com,website: http://homepages.tesco.net/flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743). A bi-monthly magazine called "Perfectly Frank" is issued.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £6.50 (UK), £7.50 (Europe) and $15 (USA). A quarterly newsletter is issued.

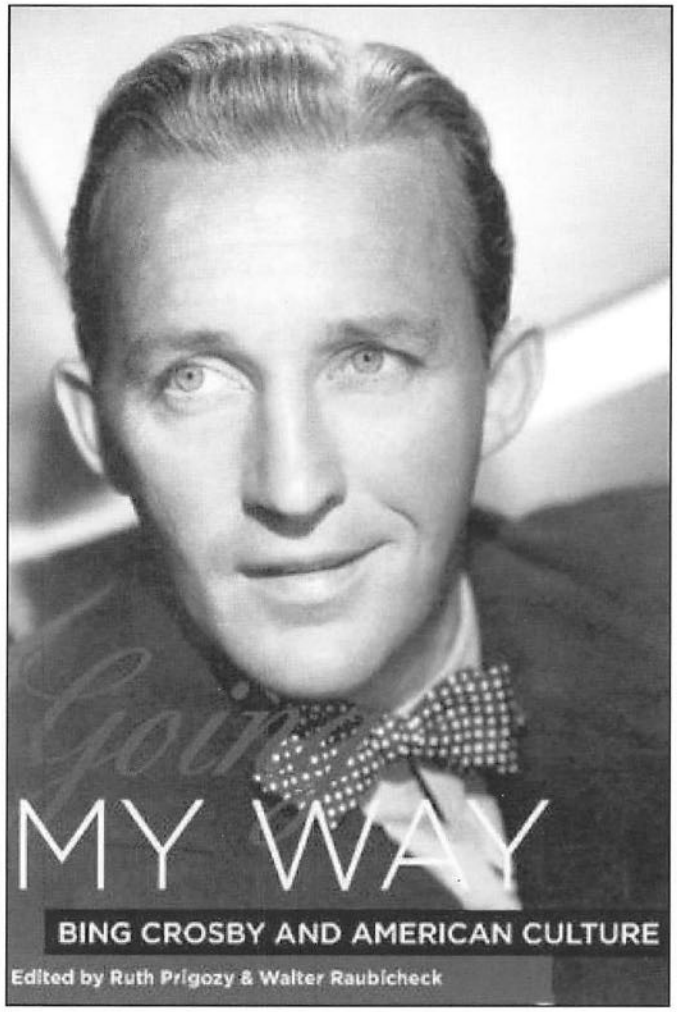
Books 'n' Bing

1. Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture

Edited by Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck. Published by the University of Rochester Press. ISBN-10: 1580462618. ISBN-13: 978-1580462617. 202 pages. Hardcover, $39.95

What would make you buy yet another book about Bing Crosby? What do you look for before you decide to add another Crosby volume to your bookshelf? Is it variety? A well researched text? A diversity of opinions? A new slant on a familiar theme? An unexplored comer of Crosbyana? If it is all of these, then "Going My Way" is for you. This is what you get from a volume that collects together a series of papers delivered at Hofstra University. In 2002 a conference on "Crosby and American Culture" was held there and the contributors to this book prove to be experts in their own specific field. I'll explore the book under those above headings.

Variety. The range of subjects is wide. Bing as the godfather of rock 'n' roll rubs shoulders with his support of research during World War II. A detailed look at his performance in *The Country Girl* features a few chapters away from his contribution to Disney's *Ichabod and Mr. Toad*.



Research. This is scholarly. Facts are supported by source. Chapter and verse prove that speculation has no place in a book that deals in substance rather than myth. There is a awkwardly titled chapter "Saint Bing: Apatheia, Masculine Desire and the Films of Bing Crosby". You may not agree with the author, Elaine Anderson Phillips. You may not even understand her thesis. But you do not doubt her conclusions when she quotes authorities as diverse as Aristotle, Catherine of Sienna and the more familiar Giddins and Macfarlane.

Diversity of opinion. What else would you expect when record producer and author Ken Barnes is between the same hard covers as associate professor of philosophy David E. White from St. John Fisher College, Rochester? Or our own Wig Wiggins writing about Bing's fan clubs whilst Samuel L. Chell contrasts Crosby with Sinatra?

A new slant on a familiar theme. Here is something I can comment on with a degree of insight. I once wrote an article about the depiction of Bing in cartoon films. So too did Stephen C. Shafer in his paper "From Crooner to American Icon: Caricatures of Bing Crosby in American Cartoons from the 1930s to the 1950s." Not only is the title of his article several times as long as mine, his findings show how surface scratching my own effort was.

An unexplored corner of Crosbyana. I thought I knew just about all there was to know about Bing's

contribution to the introduction of magnetic tape. It took our own Martin McQuade along with Pete Hammar to tell the full story. Audio and video tape owe far more to Bing than I realised. And I was totally ignorant on Crosby and Catholicism until I read Eric Michael Mazur's article.

I'd already heard some of these papers on cassette tape. Editor Malcolm's submission, "Bing's Entertainment and War Bond Sales Activities During World War II" made for interesting listening, but in print it is supported by notes almost as detailed as the article itself. Read the book and find yourself muttering, "didn't know that." Your powers of comprehension may be challenged by some of the offerings but you will be rewarded by a greater insight into what made the most popular entertainer of the twentieth century tick.

Keith Parkinson

2. The Star Machine

By Jeanine Basinger. Illustrated. 586 pages. Alfred A. Knopf. $35.

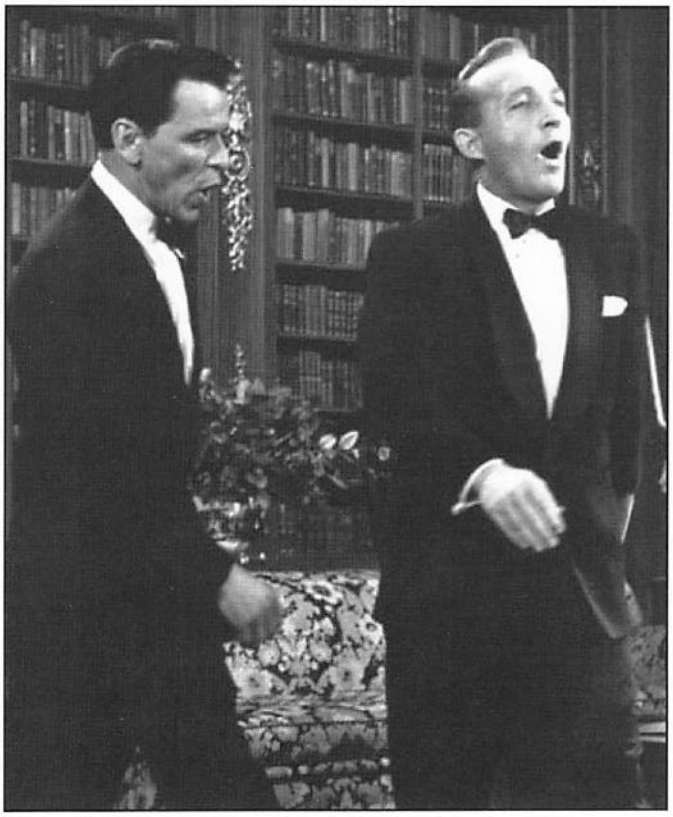
Keith mentioned Martin McQuade and here is the man himself considering Bing's star quality as described in this new book.

Movie star quality... what exactly is it? The Hollywood moguls were confident they possessed the answer, lording over a studio system whose very existence depended upon their knack for identifying, nurturing and mythologizing the gilt edged commodity known as the film star. This system, for the most part, provided a reliable and serviceable assembly line, furnishing performers for a continual stream of silver screen product.

Reduced to its essence, the solution to the question seems to be, "You know it when you see it." Yet there are aspects to this enigma which remain elusive. Why did some stellar candidates fail after fastidious grooming? Why did star-making formulae consistently fail, as demonstrated by the Clark Gable and Betty Grable clones who didn't endure? How does one satisfactorily explain why certain members of the hierarchy of the golden years transcend contemporary fame and enter the pantheon while others remain shrouded in oblivion?

A new book, "The Star Machine" published by Alfred A. Knopf, attempts to isolate the "X' factor which remains Hollywood's cash cow and in the process goes a long way towards unraveling some of the mysteries of the celluloid sphinx. Written by noted historian Jeanine Basinger (chair of the film studies department of Wesleyan University and curator of its cinema archives), this heavily illustrated volume is an exhaustive survey of the methods employed by the major movie studios to satisfy the appetites of a fantasy-hungry world with an amazing smorgasbord of movie personalities. Representative luminaries are examined and dissected to discover the origins of their allure, the ingredients of their charisma, the trajectory of their legend, and, in the cases of many, the sign posts of tragedy and despair. Yet this is no hagiography. It is rather a treatise on the process by which these personalities were manufactured; and how a small number of them withstood the rigors of being well paid chattel and emerged from the meat-grinding apparatus to cast extraordinary spells upon millions of moviegoers.

Basinger offers at the very outset of her book, in the introduction to "Part One: Stars and the Factory System," a basic key to immortality. "Great stars were 'alive' inside the frame. It was their home, their owed space." In order to illustrate her thesis she provides this analysis of a favorite example of intricately woven cinematic magic.



When Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, two consummate stars, sing "Did Ya Evah" (sic) in High Society (1956) they prove the point. "Did Ya Evah" was a tough assignment. Sinatra and Crosby had to sing, hit their camera marks, respect the sophisticated Cole Porter lyrics, deliver scripted dialogue, stay within their characters, pretend to be slightly drunk, keep the beat of the orchestra playback, move around a specially designed library set with limited space while following a specific choreography that had to look improvised, and never forget that they were rivals for the audience's affection, "Frankie" and "Bing." They had to watch out for each other in more ways than one. (Each was keenly aware of the other's star power.)

These men are what stars are, doing what stars do. They seem as if they're making it up right in front of you. (The illusion of stardom is always the illusion of ease.) Looking at them perform " Did Ya

Evah" is a lesson in star definition: two hardworking professionals are executing a complicated musical assignment in order to look like two amateurs who're reeling through an accidental musical romp. Fifty years later, after they're both dead and gone, they are still alive inside the frame – still making it appear that it's happening in front of you, in the moment.

(The opening pages are adorned by a photo of the two stars performing "Well, Did You Evah" and a publicity shot captioned, "A successful star trio: Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, stabilized by Dorothy Lamour, in *Road to Zanzibar*")

The Star Machine was hardly infallible. There was an inherent malfunction, described by Basinger as "the failure of the machine to sell an actor or actress that the studio had worked hard to turn into a movie star...Malfunction is a mystery best solved in retrospect, and a good way to understand it is to compare a successful star to a failed one. For instance, why does Bing Crosby become a top star for decades and Perry Como doesn't?"

In her answer Basinger gives a summation of Crosby's abiding and complex screen allure.

Como is better looking than Crosby, and he, too, can sing beautifully. Like Crosby, Como was said to be laid back, a relaxed guy you'd like to have around. But seen on a movie screen, trying to act out a role, Como is stiff and bland and offers no connection to the viewer. He's not movie star material. Como did become a star on television, an entirely different medium, but as himself, not in performed roles... Crosby, who is, of course, the greater singer and more original stylist, has something else that Como lacks: a mysterious edge. Crosby sails along through whatever material he has to deal with, giving it a light touch that robs it of its overly sentimental quality and shoring up its lack of depth. He easily tosses off amusing asides as if they're ad libs, and these remarks often have a tinge of cruelty to them. There's meanness too in Crosby, and audiences liked him for it. There are demons floating behind his cow eyes. Moviegoers didn't care if he was a bad drunk, an unsympathetic father, a meandering husband – they were with him all the way. Como is nice, but on film that's all he seems to be. He's too nice. It's not enough.

Notwithstanding the spuriousness of that last claim – Crosby had peerless press relations throughout his tenure as a top movie star and the public hardly heard a hint of such alleged peccadilloes - Basinger's attempt to render tangible the essence of his screen magnetism has merit.

Crosby's brand of warmth – friendly, casual despite that underlying edge – came across in anything: movies, radio, recordings, and television. In addition to his obvious musical talent, Crosby could act... He could be cast comfortably with a variety of leading ladies... he paired easily and effectively with whomever he was assigned – a major asset in the studio system. Just as important, Crosby was easily adaptable to another leading man. His confidence inside the frame allowed him to adjust his attitude and manner to any male co-star without fear of being upstaged.

Although Basinger's litany of Crosby's male colleagues includes a curious lapse in research when she states that he co-starred with Donald O'Connor in *Sing, Baby, Sing*, it is refreshing to read an account of Crosby as an exemplar of the complete movie star (The bibliography contains "Bing Crosby: Day by Day" as a reference.)

Basinger selects one of Crosby's perennial partnerships to underscore the supreme self-possession which made it impossible for anyone to steal his spotlight.

Finally, confronted with the over-the-top Irishness and twinkle of the mugging {Barry} Fitzgerald, Crosby nonchalantly lets Fitzgerald get on with it, watching with a touch of detached amusement that nevertheless borders on the judgmental. Crosby keeps Fitzgerald in place every step of the way.

Basinger refers to this egalitarian nature of Crosby's stardom elsewhere in her book. In a chapter entitled "Retooling for World War II" she acknowledges the enormous appeal of Abbott and Costello's lunacy even though she never found it personally appealing. By way of contrast she fondly recalls Hope and Crosby.

The coolly sophisticated (yet accessible) opposites to Abbott and Costello were Bob Hope and Bing Crosby...The comedy of Hope and Crosby was War Relief to Abbott and Costello's combat zone. Bing and Bob could act zany if they had to, but everything they put on screen spoke of a laid-back self confidence, a kind of "We don't have to do this if we don't want to" nonchalance. They were so good they could be arrogant about it. Most people don't realize that between 1930 and 1970, two of the top five box office champions were Bing and Bob...Their perfection as a movie comedy team was an unexpected bonus for World War II audiences and for their own longevity. They counterbalance Abbott and Costello, their sophistication a relief from the hard–hitting desperation of the A&C comedy stance. Hope and Crosby moving through the frame are prime examples of movie stars on parade. In World War II they exude a democratic attitude. "We're not magical beings up here," they seem to be saying.

"We're just a couple of schlubs trying to make a living." To strengthen this "we're one of you" attitude, they play jerks, failures. Hope's character is always a coward and trying unsuccessfully to get a woman into bed. Crosby is lazy, a con artist ruthlessly willing to risk Hope's life but never his own. They are improvisational and easily absorb each other's skills. Hope is a comic, and Crosby is funny. Crosby is a singer, and Hope is musical. Both can really hoof a number. They were a perfect team, two wildly individual talents who could nevertheless subsume their individuality to become a smoothly operating musical comedy duo. They are natural, and they have warmth. It's a strange kind of nasty warmth that comes out of Bob Hope, but it's tempered by being reflected through the easy charm of Crosby.

(Basinger makes note of an effort on the part of Warner Brothers to duplicate this symbiosis with the pairing of Jack Carson and Dennis Morgan in a pair of films.)

"The Star Machine" measures Crosby's enormous screen popularity by the number of his fan magazine cover appearances (rare for male stars), and by his regular inclusion in Quigley Publication's all-important annual poll of box office attractions. Basinger draws the following statistical conclusion

The records of the top ten ranks show clearly that it was easier for men to last for decades than for women. John Wayne was on top for nearly twenty – five years, Gary Cooper for eighteen, Gable for sixteen, and Bing Crosby for fifteen. It's almost as if, once a male star arrived, longevity was available to him if he wanted it.

Crosby's power in Hollywood was so pervasive and his show business dominance so pre-eminent that he stands as a star apart, a maverick among the greats. There is no template that adequately satisfies his unique status. Perhaps Basinger should have devoted an entire chapter to grapple with this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the astute appraisal which appears in her acclaimed and popular book will, it is hoped, give impetus to a re-evaluation of his astonishing screen oeuvre.

Crosby is what you can call a real movie star – so much so that he's often not even thought of as one. He's loose with it. {Film critic and historian} David Thompson says Crosby "has a good case as the most popular American to appear in movies." Crosby is the quintessential American man, our most comfortable vision of us. (Jimmy Stewart is too neurotic in some of his roles for an ideal version of ourselves – he gets mad a lot.) Crosby is not the tallest, not the handsomest, not the sexiest or the biggest dreamboat, but he is calm, tolerant, funny, romantic, capable, honest – and he's got that meanness, plus a touch of larceny and the ability to con anyone out of anything. That's an American. (Pages 106-107)

Martin McQuade

3. Uncle Sam without Whiskers

The rationale for this familiar mythic designation is explored in an informative, thoroughly researched essay, **"Marketing Iron Pigs, Patriotism and Peace: Bing Crosby and World War II: A Discourse"** which appears in the October, 2007 issue of "The Journal of Popular Culture," published by Blackwell Publications. (Vol.40, #5, pp.867-881)). This paper, written by Professor Mary Anne Schofield PhD of Villanova University, was originally presented at the 2002 Hofstra Conference but for some reason is not included in the *Going My Way* book reviewed by Keith Parkinson on an earlier page.

Bing Crosby...was the reluctant, oftentimes quixotic, but always the quintessential hero and salesman of World War II. Crosby invested America...with his own brand of common-sense patriotism, plain-dealing, and pride. It was his vision of the war that shaped America and Americans during the war and in the immediate postwar years.

This plausible assertion is explored through an examination of Crosby's efforts in the fields of war bond promotion, morale-boosting entertainment, employment and research/invention. Of particular interest is Prof. Schofield's account of the conversion of Del Mar Race Track into an aircraft parts manufacturing plant. Ninety percent of the re-configured track's workforce was comprised of women (the national average was twenty three percent) who turned out cockpit floors for the "Liberator" bomber and wing assemblies (Bing's Wings) for "Flying Fortresses." 28,000 completed aircraft and 5000 plane equivalents, as well as a variety of other training and transport planes were delivered by the facility between 1941 and 1945. She attributes the transformation of San Diego from a quiet community into an industrial metropolis to what she identifies as "Bing's Boom."

Prof. Schofield focuses much attention on The Crosby Research Foundation, created in 1940 and administered by Crosby's brother Larry. This business venture, in close coordination with the War Department, provided research, manufacture and marketing of over 50,000 ideas and patents. The Foundation at peak production produced finished viable inventions at the astonishing rate of one per week. The intricate details of this almost philanthropic operation are explained, as are several contraptions devised as secret weapons. One was a radio-controlled "iron pig" loaded with dynamite

which could descend upon the enemy; a lens enabling fliers to see through fog; a battering-ram mousetrap which could deflect torpedoes; and a fluoroscope which yielded a three-dimensional view of embedded bullets.

By far, the most fantastic of these military brainstorms (or firestorms) was known as "Project X-Ray." Although never executed, its boast was that Tokyo could be devastated by the high altitude drop of canisters containing scores of bats equipped with incendiary devices attached to their necks. The bats, upon release, would naturally perch on the myriad Japanese wooden structures and ignite a conflagration that perhaps might have rendered The Manhattan Project useless. (Recommended is "Bat Bomb" by Jack Couffer and published by the University of Texas Press in 1992).

The Foundation's creations had application beyond the military, spawning gadgets which could vastly improve civilian life: the better smoking pipe, paintbrush holder, ashtray, soap-holder, cigarette box, paint mixer, and tooth brush with its own supply of toothpaste.

According to Prof. Schofield, all of Crosby's wartime achievements were a natural extension of the man himself, one who exemplified the common man. Although her endeavor is undermined by a vague and questionable attempt to detect ominous underpinnings to his war image ("the persona that Crosby created and portrayed was one of a maturing ingénue who learned the necessity of aggression, invincibility and power"), it does succeed in illuminating an obscure facet of his legacy. Perhaps the appearance of this essay in such a popular forum will arouse further interest in America's troubadour as visionary industrialist and military magnate.

Martin McQuade

Bing - The Final Chapter

Another man who was at Hofstra was Colin Stewart who has a little more to tell us about his topic.

When I presented that part of the Hofstra session we had on Bing overseas, mine dealt with his UK concert tours as I had been fortunate enough to attend his penultimate Palladium performance.

To illustrate my talk I relied mostly on the double LP set of the 1976 tour produced by Ken Barnes. But I had also had the BBC Records LP based on the Maida Vale recording session on 11th October 1977 and used some of the Alan Dell introductions. Playing that LP, I realised that none of Rosemary Clooney's contribution to that historic day was on the record.

So I found my cassette of the original broadcast of 27th December 1977 and have copied down all the speech content of that session that is not already on the LP. It would seem a shame to lose such an important part of the Crosby/Clooney partnership and I hope this might be of interest.

BING - The Final Chapter

Broadcast recording at the BBC Maida Vale studio 3 on 11th October 1977

The show that featured Bing, Rosemary Clooney and the Gordon Rose orchestra was introduced by Alan Dell and was broadcast on BBC Radio 2 on 27th December 1977. BBC Records later issued an LP, Bing - The Final Chapter, number REB 398 on which there was other excellent material such as excerpts from the 1975 Michael Parkinson show, the 1944 Variety Bandbox with Anne Shelton and further interviews by Alan Dell with Kathryn Crosby, Rosemary Clooney and Ted Rogers. However, presumably for contractual reasons, none of the Rosie Clooney songs or chat with Alan Dell were put on this LP. I was lucky to have heard the December '77 broadcast and recorded it on a somewhat Lo-Fi portable radio recorder. So I have extracted the Clooney song titles and any relevant interviews with Bing and Rosie from the original broadcast which do not appear on the BBC Records LP which the following complements.

[BC sings "Nevertheless"]

AD: Nevertheless, that really is an all-time favourite with so many people. Thank you very much for including it Bing, it was marvellous.

BC: Now I see you've got Rosie Clooney standing over there.

AD: So we have.

BC: I'd love to hear her belt a couple.

AD: Would you like to do that.....

BC: Is she prepared.....rehearsed? Gordon Rose's orchestra I guess; she's great in the show this year, we do a Noel Coward medley and she gets a chance to sing "Mad About the Boy".

[RC sings "Mad About the Boy"]

AD: Rosemary Clooney, "Mad About the Boy", thank you very much Rosie, don't stray too far we are back with you in a moment.

[BC sings "Summer Wind]

AD: Bing singing the words of his great friend Johnny Mercer. We are with Rosemary Clooney again now for a quite beautiful song which creates a most moving picture.

[RC sings "Have I Stayed Too Long at the Fair?"].

AD: What an atmospheric song that is. Rosemary, your

many fans will never forgive us if you don't sing "Come On A-My House". As I recall you first recorded that in the summer of 1951. When I was in America in 1952 it was being played day and night on every radio station.
RC: I lost so many friends that summer because that's all they could really get on the radio. There was one man who played it, I think, for an hour and a half straight; that's a cute little song but my goodness, to hear it for an hour and a half straight, I am sure people wanted to jump out of the window by that time.
AD: But this is a new arrangement that you have.
RC: Yes, Pete Moore did it. Actually I've found the way to keep it sort of fresh, is to have a new arrangement done about every six months.
AD: That's a very good idea.
RC: Yes so that somebody else has a different version of it and it keeps it fresh for me because otherwise it could get very tiresome.
[RC sings "Come On A-My House"]
AD: That Clooney evergreen; but here's a ballad that has stood the test of popularity even longer.
[BC sings "The Night is Young and You're So Beautiful" after an intro to AD]
AD: Rosie, how would you re-introduce Bing here?
RC: Oh let's get back to father!
[BC sings "As Time Goes By"]
AD: A song that's come back into fashion or perhaps it's never been out, anyway not since "Casablanca". Rosemary I think you have one more for everyone, appropriately "A Song for You".
RC: A marvellous arrangement by Mr. Pete Moore, I finish with it actually so it has the tabs right at the end.
[RC sings "A Song for You"]
AD: Rosemary, thank you very much indeed.
RC: Oh it's a joy, please ask me again.
AD: I will do.
RC: Thank you.
AD: And as Gordon Rose and the orchestra play for Rosemary to take her curtain call, Bing nods his appreciation and gets ready to sing a certain catalogue song entitled "There Isn't Anything I Haven't Sung About".
BC: We use that in the opening of the act to try to demonstrate the number of titles I've been associated with but we couldn't possibly get 'em all in but it touches on some of them in a rather amusing and interesting way and was first used on a Jackie Gleason show.
[BC sings "There Isn't Anything I Haven't Sung About"]
AD: Bing, it has been a delight and a great pleasure to have you and Rosemary share this time with us.
BC: Oh it's wonderful, wonderful to have this chance to sing for BBC and with this bunch of songs particularly because they're all songs I like very much.
AD: Thank you and this, the last song of all.
[BC sings "Once In a While"].

Notes and extracts from BBC Radio 2 by Colin Stewart, Cambridge, UK

Crosby Plays Spokane

Carolyn Schneider is still keeping busy as she tells us about a visit to Spokane.

The Bing Crosby Theater in Uncle Bing's home town of Spokane, Washington held their second annual film festival on December 7th, 2007.

I was invited to be a part of the event by giving a presentation from the stage and a book signing of "Me and Uncle Bing" in the lobby of the theater.

I had never been to the Bing Crosby Theater before now and I found it to be both functional and charming. Built in 1913, with seating for 750, this small theater has a feeling of intimacy that I thought was perfect for showing Bing's films. It also has a stage that is suitable for plays or musical groups. Since the days when Uncle Bing appeared here, back in 1925, the theater has been refurbished, yet has kept the original lay-out of the building. The marquee in front of the entrance is both colorful and eye-catching with its blinking neon lights and Bing's name. The festival brought close to five hundred people to the theater, where the films *The Bells of St. Mary's* and *White Christmas* were shown. It was an all day affair with added attractions such as myself, the Gonzaga singers, and remarks given by Advocate Bill Stimson.

Advocates of the Bing Crosby Theater are a volunteer group of approximately a dozen locals who act as hosts for Bing events. These people are a great asset to the Bing image and they really made my visit effortless, tending to every need. The person in charge of publicity Stefanie Pettit, made arrangements in advance for me to appear on two separate television news programs to promote the festival, as well as my book. She actually drove me to my appointments! Mrs. Pettit also booked me into the Davenport Hotel and Auntie's Bookstore.

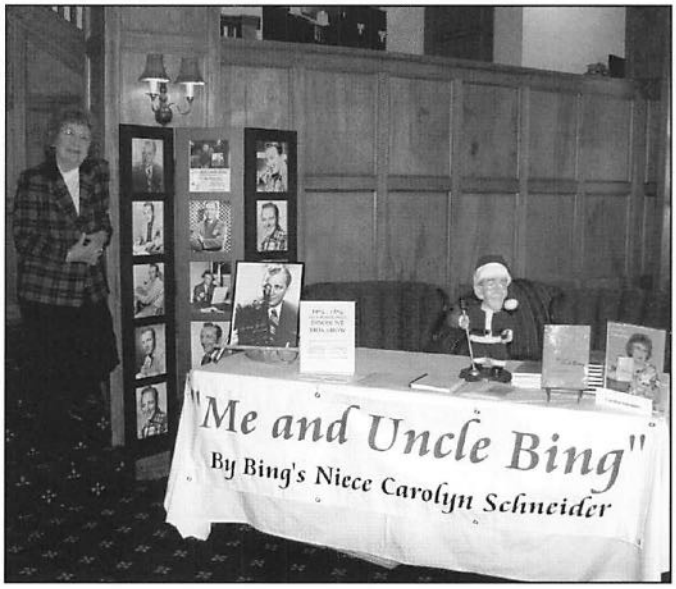
The Advocates have proclaimed the festival a success and were kind enough to say that they felt my appearances helped add interest and attendance.

I believe all Bing fans can be proud of the theater that bears his name and the Advocates who keep his legacy and music alive. The movie crowd that attended that day left the theater wearing a broad smile and humming "White Christmas", as outside a light snow began to fall. I bet Uncle Bing would have liked that.

Carolyn Schneider

(Editor: Carolyn now has a web site at www.unclebing.bravehost.com

Apart from the Spokane event, she did a book signing in the lobby of the Boulder Dam Hotel at the end of November and the photo captures the event.)



Bing at the Elko museum

Last November, Carolyn was very upset to find that the many items she had donated to the museum in Elko were no longer on display. Furthermore the museum would not return the items as Carolyn had formally donated them. The Associated Press got hold of the story and it literally appeared all over the world. Here's one example from MSN Entertainment on November 21, 2007.

Bing Crosby Exhibit Criticized in Nevada

Bing Crosby lassoed the hearts of locals as the proud owner of seven ranches around Elko at the height of his show biz career in the 1940s and 1950s.

The crooner, best known for "White Christmas" and the "road" movies he made with Bob Hope, was named Elko's honorary mayor in 1948. He donated thousands of dollars to local causes, gave occasional free performances and put Elko on the map by having the city host the 1951 premiere of his film *Here Comes the Groom*.

Thirty years after his death, angry family members and friends are accusing Elko's Northeastern Nevada Museum of disrespecting his legacy by drastically scaling back its Crosby exhibit.

Crosby's niece, Carolyn Schneider, said the museum had the second largest public Crosby memorabilia collection in the country until it was dismantled this past summer. Gonzaga University in Crosby's hometown of Spokane, Wash., has the largest.

While the crooner's widow Kathryn Crosby did not wish to publicly comment, she privately expressed disappointment over the museum's action, Schneider said.

"To take that away from him is very unfair. It diminishes his show business career and importance to Elko and Elko County," said Schneider, author of "Me and Uncle Bing."

Hobie Wilson, president of the Bing's Friends and Collectors Society, said the museum's move was insulting: "(It) was a slap in the face to Crosby fans all over the world. It's like they're sitting on the man's grave."

Museum Director Claudia Wines acknowledges Crosby's contributions to the mining and ranching town about 300 miles east of Reno. But she said the museum's mission is to feature items from the region, and she won't reconsider the decision to only show memorabilia from Crosby's Elko days.

The museum expanded its Crosby exhibit after Schneider in 2004 donated about 30 items unrelated to his time in Elko.

Included were photos of Crosby's home in Pebble Beach, Calif., a set of monogrammed bed linens, sheet music, record albums, Christmas cards and newspaper articles.

A new Crosby exhibit, which opened earlier this fall, is about one-quarter the size of the old one, Wines said. It includes photos of Crosby in Elko, a branding iron from one of his ranches, a trophy he donated to a local rodeo and a denim tuxedo said to have been presented to Crosby.

"It's not like the rest of his life is being ignored. There are other places that tell the rest of the story," Wines said.

"In retrospect, we shouldn't have gone to the bigger exhibit. It wasn't the smart thing to do because it went against our mission of telling the story about northeastern Nevada."

Kathleen Oldham Taylor, 69, a member of a longtime Elko County ranching family, said she supports the museum's decision. Her father, a real estate agent, became a close Crosby friend after selling ranches to the entertainer.

"Bing sang me to sleep many a night, and was such a fine man," Taylor said. "He enjoyed his privacy and laid-back life out here, and he would be as embarrassed as hell over this. He wouldn't think it's a big deal what the museum has done."

Crosby was one of the most popular entertainers of the 20th century, a huge star on stage, radio, movies and television. His recording of "White Christmas" was for decades the biggest selling single of all time. He won the 1944 best actor Academy Award for *Going My Way*.

His role in the 1936 movie, *Rhythm on the Range*, is credited for fueling his desire for the cowboy life and Old West.

He became a familiar sight on the streets of Elko, wearing faded blue jeans and straw hat, while he owned a succession of ranches around Elko from 1943 to 1958.

The town was an escape from the pressures of Hollywood for Crosby, who enjoyed ranching, fishing

and hunting, Schneider said. And he appreciated that the locals treated him as a "regular guy." Crosby visited Nevada each summer with his four sons by marriage to his first wife, Dixie Lee, and paid them cowhand wages to work on the ranches. He sold the ranches after his sons expressed no interest in continuing the operations.

Dixie Lee died in 1952; all four sons also have since died. Crosby died at age 74 on a golf course in Spain in October 1977.

The exhibit has been moved from a back room to the museum's main gallery where more people will be able to see it, Wines said.

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The many articles seen produced some wonderful publicity for Bing. Carolyn emailed your editor as follows:

> Please convey my "thanks" to all the Crosby fans who contacted the Elko museum on my behalf. The woman in charge said she never expected to receive so many letters and emails from England. As a result of the pressure, she has returned my mementos at last. I've been told that a new Bing Crosby exhibit is in place, but it is only one-tenth the size of the large, handsome display that was removed. Shall we simply mark it up to experience and say, "better than no exhibit at all"?

Sadly, I think we must.

The Bing Crosby Trail

Bert Bishop reviews the 6-part series on Bing, broadcast by the BBC in November and December

In an ever changing world it is inevitable that mutations in a great many aspects of life have occurred and will continue to occur, not only from dress codes to the food on our table but also embracing much wider issues. Thus, for those of us who grew up with quite different experiences and appreciation of what I like to call the three 'M's - Morals, Manners and Music - our perspective of many of these changes is difficult to come to terms with. It is, therefore, quite understandable that through Bing and his legacy of films and music we can relive our experiences and enjoy what some will call nostalgia. The word may apply to the memory of the times, but not the music. Good music remains good music. So, with a six-part series pursuing Bing's career, broadcast on BBC Radio 2, this good music, and the man responsible for it, was a timely reminder to the newer generations who have their own heroes and social criteria. Will it make any difference? Unlikely; but at least an awareness of the man beyond the perennial Christmas song may have registered.

Part 1 of the series, commencing on the 2nd November 2007 and presented by Michael Freedland, explained that it was to be more geographical than biographical which soon became apparent. This, to quote Mr. Freedland, was to be 'A journey of exploration of the life of a man who at one time was king of all he surveyed; before Elvis, before Sinatra the name of Bing Crosby on a record label was a licence to print money.'

We were told we would not be hearing from sycophants or fanatics, only less well known associates; though both Bing's wife and daughter could be hardly so described let alone Ken Barnes and Buddy Bregman. Maybe Stephanie Plowman, Howard Crosby, historian Martin McQuade, Jim Kershner, AC Lyles who, at eighty-nine, still works at Paramount Studios, qualify, each of whom had their part to play with anecdotes on Bing's boyhood years, swimming and golf prowess, his work at the famous film studio and the extent of the vast amount of memorabilia at Gonzaga University Museum of which Ms Plowman is curator. This where he is remembered, not in his home town of Spokane; there are no streets bearing his name and where there are many local residents who have never heard of him avows the mayor. But the municipal swimming pool where Bing once won seven medals remains much the same as ever. Ken Barnes, Bing's record producer in his latter years, said that although he couldn't read music Bing had the best ear of anybody he had ever recorded while Kathryn Crosby was to say his old alma mater had a great influence on Bing especially with diction and the classical education he acquired there. Another local historian, Bill Stimson, was to say that the Jesuit institution and church of St. Aloysius had a great bearing on Bing's ability to three times play the role of a Catholic priest. 'No question about it.' Whilst all very interesting the half hour went very quickly; rather bitty but very little bite. What did the non-aficionado think of it? Who knows? I've yet to meet one who listened in!

Geographically this first episode took us from London, England, to Los Angeles, New York City and Washington State, musically illustrated with snippets from a wide variety of original recordings: Swinging On A Star, Road To Morocco, That's What Life Is All About, I'm Hummin', I'm Whistlin', I'm Singin', They All Laughed, Side By Side, Dear Hearts And Gentle People, The Bells Of St. Mary's, Ave Maria, You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me, Dardanella [non-Bing], I'll Be Home For Christmas, Muddy Water, Straight Down The Middle, Learn To Croon.

Part 2 was more fluid inasmuch as it went back to Bing's roots, Spokane, 'where he acted, sang, ate and drank.'; the latter word stressed with the promise of more to come later. Bill Stimson was on hand again with his recollections and awareness of Bing's natural and unusual talent that was to see the old Clemmer Theatre revitalized and change its name to the Bing Crosby Theatre. Bing's nephew, Howard Crosby, pointed out that Bing's screen personality was not what people saw on film. 'He was more intense than that'. Howard believed that he modelled himself on his father for his

screen persona; unassuming and quite 'laid back'. The story moved along from Bing's meeting with Al Rinker and The Musicaladers as their drummer to Bing's departure with Al for Los Angeles and 'fame and fortune'. Jim Price was asked if Bing would have become a star without the Al Rinker-Mildred Bailey-Paul Whiteman connection. 'Eventually', he mooted; though how that might have come about was not pursued. Chance and fate takes its own path.

Meantime the performing artistes of that era and their effect on Bing were discussed. Cue a sketch with Al Jolson and duet of 'Back In Your Own Back Yard'. Howard was to relate how Gary Crosby wrote some pretty nasty things about his father at a time when he, Gary, was on drugs and alcohol and that his brother, Phillip, refuted the accusations. Invited to sing 'Star Dust' Howard made a good job of it off the cuff, with no musical accompaniment, but this gradually 'morphed' into Bing's 1931 version. Martin McQuade noted that the Rhythm Boys' early appearance at the Paramount Theatre was less than successful but when Bing went solo that was all to change. We also heard from script writer Hal Kanter at the Hard Rock Theatre, the old Paramount building, where few were either aware of Bing or his performances there. Jerome Pickman, a publicity agent for Paramount Studios commented on Bing's business acumen when Bing said the film *White Christmas* should be released early autumn and not at the Yuletide season in order to cash in on record sales. As the album was cut in April 1954 this would have made sense. Snippets of other songs featured were Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive, Down The Old Ox Road, Why Can't You Behave, Wistful And Blue, Muddy Water, Sunday, Monday Or Always. Gone Fishin', Dinah, Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral, San Fernando Valley.

Part 3 took us on The Family Trail, first meeting up with Kathryn Crosby at her Hillsborough home near San Francisco, now a shrine to her husband. Previously owned by Bing's friend Charles Howard, owner of the famous racehorse, Seabiscuit, Bing had replaced the racetrack pictures so that the walls and furniture became adorned with pictures and objet d'art of the Wild West. 'I'd wake up in the morning wondering if I was going to be scalped!' Bing's protracted 'proposal' and their subsequent family performing at the London Palladium with their parents introduced Mary Crosby on the programme. 'Dad was always boss, but he was very quiet about it. We had very little connection with the first family.' she mused. Kathryn said Bing loved his first wife, Dixie. 'She was very beautiful'. Journeying to Mapleton Drive in Los Angeles Michael met up with Bing's niece, Carolyn Schneider, author of the fairly recent biography 'Me And Uncle Bing'. 'He was a nice uncle; no airs, very casual and relaxed. He dearly loved Dixie.'

Controversy arose when Michael met up with Bing's daughters-in-law Susan and Arlene Crosby at the Bing Crosby Restaurant in Palm Springs. Arlene, wife to Dennis, found Bing rather cold and spoke of when Bing called Dennis ugly, and said the boys had been beaten. Susan told a very different story. 'They [his four sons] were all deeply troubled people', while Phillip Crosby son of Phillip Snr. said his father and all the boys were a walking target, often surrounded by ne'er-do-wells, with fear of kidnap a reality.

Bing and Dixie clown together at the piano.

Mary spoke of her father's high standards; his old-fashioned values and Carolyn said whilst he was a disciplinarian, social mores had changed since the upbringing of his first family. Kathryn had the last word: 'He did everything a good man should do.'

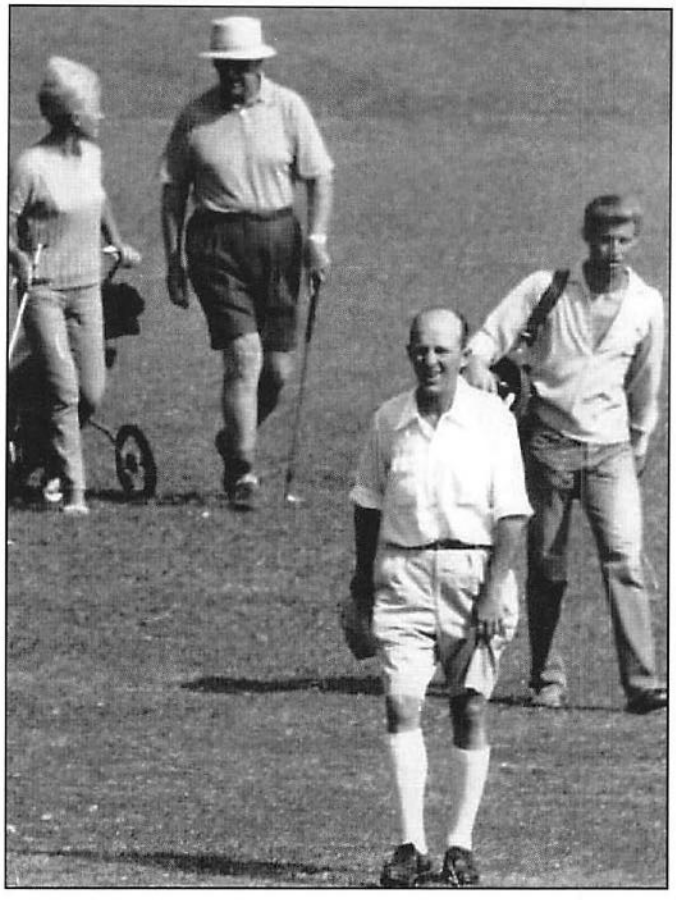
Heard throughout the programme to musically illustrate the dialogue were: True Love, Deep In The Heart Of Texas, I'm An Old Cowhand, Sing, [Palladium, family], Love Is The Sweetest Thing, I Found A Million Dollar Baby, Harbour Lights, Temptation, Play A Simple Melody, In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening, Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams, Breezin' Along With The Breeze

Part 4 concerned a Journey Through Bing's Sporting Life. That his abiding passion was golf is well chronicled and as near to a religion as one can get. Kathryn Crosby realised after Bing's death how fit he had kept from this healthy, outdoor activity, though she was aware of those days of depression when the game hadn't gone well. She took lessons herself in order to share the activity but Bing's greatest elation was when Nathaniel won the Burlingame Golf Club Tournament. To Pebble Beach where historian Neal Hotelling related how Bing began the famous Tournament in 1947 which ran until 1985. It attracted more viewers than the U.S. Open. 'In many ways he is still here' avowed Neal.

Bing's caddy, Joe Soliss, said Bing was a wonderful man and never had a bad word about anybody but he was a bad loser, but only in the sense that he didn't like to lose the stake money, and would insist on a rematch until he had won his money back! Bob Hope [about whom there was a Bob Hope Trail broadcast in February and March this year] had a lot in common with Bing especially on the golf course but when Bing took him on a yachting holiday Bob wanted to come home – he was bored, saying 'Fish don't applaud.' He loved an audience. .

At more than half Bing's age, Kathryn still found it hard to keep up with him. He took her duck shooting in the early hours where in a hide her 'toes froze all the way to the knees'. He sometimes told her risqué jokes and would occasionally use colourful language but never in the presence of children or ladies. 'I didn't count!'

Bing's niece, Carolyn Schneider, said her favourite Crosby track is 'Empty Saddles' and that Bing was a cross-over singer who could handle anything. It was a cue to look at Bing's other great love.



A bare-headed Bing golfs with Joseph Kennedy (the father of the then President) in the south of France in August, 1961.

The trail moved down to his Elko ranch, San Diego and the founding of the Del Mar Race Track with partners Pat O'Brien and Oliver Hardy. It was the first race course to introduce 'photo finish' equipment and Bing's horse won the very first race there. Did the other jockeys hold back to give him privilege? We shall never know! Horse racing connoisseur Joe Harper said Bing was a great rider and loved horses. There was that famous race against Charles Howard's Seabiscuit which just beat Bing's entry. The jockeys were later suspended for a time for 'rough riding', it was that hotly contended! Once again Kathryn brought the journey to a close with her comments that Bing loved the sporting guides, 'keepers and gillies probably more than show business people. Which took us to the finish line via Straight Down The Middle, My Heart Is Taking Lessons, Children, All In The Game, Beautiful Memories, It Happened In Monterey, Nothing In Common, A Little Love And Understanding, Young At Heart, Morgen, Empty Saddles, Pennies From Heaven, El Rancho Grande.

Part 5. The music trail began in London, the one-time regular fifteen minutes with Bing Crosby on the wireless which always began with 'Please', and Bing and his family appearing at the Palladium from which brief excerpts were played. Mary said her father was never rude to people and courtesy was a big thing with him. This was borne out by Michael Freedland himself when he was unavoidably late for a meeting with Bing to discuss Irving Berlin. Whilst he was essentially a morning person the Palladium shows were never a problem. Mary again related how casual he was in the dressing room beforehand and Kathryn said when they sang together he modulated his voice, making it softer to accommodate her range and volume. Still in London, Michael met up with Bing's latter years' producer Ken Barnes who related how he came to meet Bing and went on to make duet albums of Bing with Johnny Mercer and Fred Astaire. Bing and Fred were 'two different guys'. Fred rehearsed to the nth degree while Bing would just show up and sing. 'He's always been like that' bemoaned Fred. Which meant that Ken had to stand in for Bing on Astaire's rehearsals.

Mary was to say how words were Bing's forté and sang 'Show Me The Way To Go Home' and 'Caterina' using enhanced, alternative words straight from a thesaurus. Ken Barnes said he had heard Bing speaking Italian, Spanish, French and German. 'Enough to get by', Bing had said.

Buddy Bregman, nineteen at the time, picked out a dozen songs Bing had never recorded before for the Verve label album they were to cut together. He related how Bing liked to start at nine a.m. and the difficulty he, Buddy, had in dragging in his musicians at that ungodly hour. 'The band crawled in. What are we doing here?' they asked.

The famous Bing and Al Jolson blow-up of their commercial was played, which caused much hilarity with the audience. But Bing's script writer, Hal Kanter, spoke of Bing's anger at the Sir Stifford Craps blooper which earned him the 'ice eyes' and the comment 'Don't ever, ever do that to me again.'

Heard from stage, studio and the radio were: Please, Don't Fence Me In, You've Got A Friend, Heat Wave,

Row, Row, Row Your Boat, The Way We Were, Good Companions, A Couple Of Song And Dance Men, Top Billing, Cuando Calienta El Sol, The Blue Room, Mountain Greenery, Lily Of Laguna, September Song.

Part 6 concluded the trail which over the series embraced Spokane in Washington State, New York, San Francisco, San Diego, Monterey and London. But it was in Hollywood where Bing came to fame through talking pictures beginning with *King Of Jazz* when, at that time, no one would have predicted he would become a star. There are few more iconic sights than the iron gates leading into Paramount Studios where that process began. Eighty-nine year old AC Lyles, erstwhile producer and still working at Paramount, said 'Bing was our biggest star and one of the biggest in Hollywood. When I was first there on $18 a week Bing asked me who were my ten best friends. I gave him names and addresses and he brought me ten of his albums which he had signed for me to add my own personalization. He took them away and mailed them. He was a very gracious person.'

Jerome Pickman, head of marketing at Paramount, described Bing's 'Hi, Tex!' meeting of Kathryn Grandstaff at Paramount which eventually led to their marriage; he also played a congratulations telephone recording that Bing made to him from Hollywood to New York on the day he, too, married. The proprietor of a local delicatessen, Geoffrey Cavelin, described how Bing would frequent his establishment and take a sandwich into his kitchen for some privacy during filming. AC Lyles again spoke of Bing and Bob Hope's friendship and how Bing was just as funny off set as the comedian. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour there were fears that Los Angeles might be next and as the Paramount Studios looked rather like an aeroplane factory, Hope expressed his concern. 'Don't worry', said Bing, 'If they attack we'll run next door to RKO. They haven't had a hit in years!'

Mort Blackman said meeting Bing was an unbelievable thrill; but he was very generous of his praise for Dorothy Lamour. 'Everybody loved her.' Bing and Bob got on so well working together despite their separate careers; the catalyst really being their love of golf.

In a round-up of many of Bing's film hits, Michael Freedland also mentioned a couple of clinkers: *Duffy's Tavern* and *Say One For Me*. But the two surprising dramatic roles, *Little Boy Lost* and *The Country Girl* were selected for special mention. Of the latter, the story goes that Joan Crawford called the studio and suggested herself, Bing and William Holden for the roles. Producer George Seaton expressed his belief that Bing, a long since reformed but erstwhile drunk in his youth, would not agree to the role. But Bing didn't hesitate, and went on to be nominated for an Oscar losing out to Marlon Brando. Joan Crawford was never contacted.

Bing congratulates Marlon Brando at the Academy Awards presentation.

Some welcome words from Rhonda Fleming – happily still with us – when she described how as a young actress on the set of *A Connecticut Yankee,* Bing would throw in a few jokes during their rehearsals which meant she had problems, often missing her cue.

Bing's family concluded the programme. First Mary said how she loved her father and how he has become 'very much a part of what I am now.' Of the song 'White Christmas' she said after her Dad's death she was upset to hear it each year but as time went by she accepted the inevitability of its' Yuletide appearance and 'now I like it.' Her mother, Kathryn, said of Bing's death on the golf course: 'What a perfect thing for him. The holy of holies.' The last round-up featured: We'll Rest At The End Of The Trail, If I Had A Talking Picture Of You, Love Is Just Around The Corner, The Waiter, The Porter And The Upstairs Maid, Put It There Pal, Chicago Style, Moonlight Becomes You, The Land Around Us, Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas, White Christmas.

Our thanks go to the BBC for putting on this series.

Bert Bishop

Celluloid Crosby

The last issue of BING contained some timely news which probably helped answer the "What would you like for Christmas, dear?" question. Page ten of the magazine mentioned the DVD release of *Mississippi* (1935) as part of a boxed set of W.C. Fields films. It would provide the first opportunity for many years for Crosby fans to see and hear Bing sing four of his best loved film songs: "Swanee River", "It's Easy to Remember", "Down by the River" and "Soon". To many, Bing was at his vocal peak when he recorded them. *Mississippi* enjoyed a brief theatrical re-release at the end of the 1940s and the BBC screened it in 1965 but it has taken over forty years for a pristine remastered print to make its home-viewing debut.

Like just about every Crosby picture of the 1930s, the cast of *Mississippi* turned out to be different from that envisaged when Paramount gave the film the green light. It was announced as a movie to star W.C. Fields with male support provided by Lanny Ross. We'll cover the star billing issue later, but who Lanny Ross? The film encyclopedia's ignore him. Yet to cast him in a major role as actor/vocalist meant he must have been a box-office force to reckoned with at the time. In fact, Ross made his film debut in 1934 in *Melody in Spring*. Three years younger than Bing, he was known as "the idol of the airwaves". Or so a press release of the time would have us believe. But Bing's star was on the ascendancy and Paramount wisely decided to cast the vocalist with stronger box-office appeal. Ross did not fade into obscurity. In 1938 he sang the Oscar nominated "A Mist is Over the Moon" from Columbia Pictures *The Lady Objects*. The following year he provided the voice of Gulliver in the animated feature *Gulliver's Travels*. He had a second crack at singing a song nominated for an Academy Award as the best film song of 1943. His rendition of "We Mustn't Say Goodbye" was a Cole Porter composition included in United-Artist's all-star release *Stage Door Canteen*. Alas, just like those all-star Hollywood films from World War II, Ross fell out of favour.

Back at Paramount, Bing was now to be top billed in *Mississippi*. This arrangement failed to please Fields. He fought for script control to protect his own scenes. The film's official credits list Francis Martin and Jack Cunningham as writers. Cunningham regularly wrote for Fields whose consent to appear in *Mississippi* was

The stars of Mississippi at work.

dependent on Cunningham being assigned as scriptwriter. Producer Arthur Hornblow also commissioned treatments from Dore Schary and Herbert Fields to maintain a balance between comedy, music and romance. To satisfy Fields, now that he was second in the cast list, five other writers worked on script revisions. If you own the DVD set of Fields' films you will find his own scriptwriting aliases on several films. His best known is Mahatma Kane Jeeves. I'm not sure if there is a Gandhi connection but Fields admired Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* and often commented on how much he enjoyed reading the Jeeves books by P.G. Wodehouse.

Mississippi was scheduled to go before the cameras on 5th November, 1934. However, W.C. Fields was still acting in *David Copperfield* at M-G-M. Bing and leading lady Joan Bennett were both available but Paramount agreed to delay shooting until Fields was available if M-G-M would pay Joan Bennett's salary whilst she was on standby. In fact, it was not until an exhausted Fields reported for filming on 27th November that the production got underway. It was a film dogged by delays. The film's two leading men were partly to blame. Bing lost the production five days when he appeared on his Woodbury Soap radio shows. It was also said that he simply disappeared to the race track on occasion. When production ended Fields had put in thirty-two day's work on the film, a few days more than Bing's contribution. Matters were not helped when Edward Sutherland, the film's director, became ill. He had been fighting influenza when filming commenced and his health began to suffer to such an extent that Fields, Crosby and Bennett refused to work unless he agreed to step down. This resulted in Sutherland handing over to Wesley Ruggles for the film's final scenes to be shot towards the middle of January, 1935. The film eventually finished fourteen days behind schedule and $100,000 over budget at $694,000.

Showbusiness journalist Harrison Carroll reported that at the completion of filming Bing would take four weeks off to visit the ranch near San Diego which he had recently purchased. It may well have been Bing's ambition to take a break but a glance at "Bing Crosby Day by Day" shows it to be (show)business as usual for both Bing and Dixie. Mrs. Crosby was still very active in films.

Like all films shot around this time, the period from filming commencing to theatrical release was short by today's standards. *Mississippi* previewed at L.A.'s Wiltshire theatre on 20th February, 1935. This was one day prior to Bing recording his four film songs for Decca. The film's running time was 85 minutes. Variety's reviewer attended the screening and wrote:

> *Before releasing Paramount should decide if it wants a romantic feature starring Bing Crosby or a hokey comedy starring W.C. Fields. Picture as it stands is neither and has little hope of getting but average grosses.*

Paramount latched onto the reviewer's "hokey"assessment. The ten minutes of footage deleted prior to release consisted in the main of W.C. Fields' routines. Now ready for its premiere, the edited version was set to please both Crosby and Fields' fans. It opened at the New York Paramount on 17th April and took $30,000 in its first week.

The film's performance at the North American box office flew in the face of its critical reception. The review in *Variety* was echoed when the Hollywood Citizen News appraised it the day after its New York premiere. James Francis Crow wrote:

> *This latest version of Booth Tarkington's story of steamboat days is a generally second-class product, and the only considerable expense in its manufacture probably arose in the casting department. It won't be well received on Broadway, but it is likely to do thriving business at Valley Junction and Six Corners, where the folks doubtless have more important matters to worry about than the quality of their screen entertainment. Crosby croons. Everybody who reads these previews knows by now that I have the same feeling for Crosby's crooning that nature has for a vacuum. Nevertheless he will be credited for what success the picture achieves, for the rest of the world continues stubbornly to pay money to hear him. He sings three Hart-Rodgers compositions... None of them, I think, is going to be a hit. Certainly they won't last as long as another which Crosby sings - "Swanee River".*

At least readers knew where they stood with James Francis Crow.

In the U.K. the film's distributor was faced with a couple of stars who had not yet achieved the position of being presold by having their names on theatre marquees. Crosby and Fields billed above the title did not guarantee healthy ticket sales. The film was first screened in Manchester at the Paramount. It was the city centre's most luxurious cinema and continued to play first run product until closure a few years ago when it had been renamed Odeon. *Mississippi* opened at that cinema in the week commencing 8th July, 1935 - as the supporting feature to a documentary! The cinema's main attraction was *Legong*, a documentary about Bali. That film's appeal could have been the bare breasted ladies who seemed to please certain sections of the audience but it was just as likely that the main selling point was the three strip Technicolor process which was a novelty at the time. But there remained a lack of confidence in the film's ability to sell tickets. The Mayfair Cinema opened in Huyton on 18th September, 1937. *Mississippi* was the first film to fill its screen. If you attended the invitation only opening, you also received a souvenir programme and afternoon tea. Yet when the cinema

threw its doors open to the great unwashed the opening attraction was the Paramount production of *The Plainsman* starring Gary Cooper. If you lived in Huyton and wanted to enjoy the Crosby/Fields musical comedy as a member of the general public you had to travel to Liverpool.

Bing Crosby and Bill Fields knew and respected each others talents. They were near neighbours when *Mississippi* was being made. Both lived on Toluca Lake Avenue. When Fields popularity and health dipped Bing was there to provide support. He booked Fields as his guest on Philco Radio Time. At the tail end of the 1946 Christmas show Ken Carpenter announced Fields as "next week's guest". The Christmas Philco show was recorded on 9th December and was broadcast on 25th December. At three o'clock on that rainy Christmas day, W.C. Fields died. Bing had planned to have Fields as his guest on the first two radio shows of 1947. Joe Frisco replaced him on the 1st January programme and Mickey Rooney stood in on the following week's show.

Finally, a word of caution. If you own the Universal Pictures "W.C. Fields - the Movie Collection" DVD set you'll be left with sixteen Fields vehicles to view once you've played *Mississippi* a few times. You may be able to watch Bing films from dawn to dusk with an occasional refreshment break. Fields is a different proposition. He's an acquired taste. Once you have that taste you'll find that a little and often generally satisfies the palate. Bon appetit.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

STEIN SONG, THE Song. Stop an old man in the street - preferably someone over the age of, say, seventy - and ask him who he associates with "The Stein Song". He'll tell you Rudy Vallee. Vallee made his hit recording four months before *Two Plus Fours* was filmed. That was the short film which featured The Rhythm Boys plus two. The couple of extra vocalists were Ed Deering and Spec O'Donnell, the quintet being billed as The College Boys. They sang "The Stein Song" three times in less than twenty minutes of screen time. A couple of their versions of this University of Maine college song were parodies of the Lincoln Colcord-E. A Fenstad original. Bing never recorded a solo version of "The Stein Song", possibly because to do the song justice it was necessary to hold a megaphone in one hand and a tankard of ale in the other.

STEPHENSON, HENRY [Henry S. Garroway] (1871-1956) Actor. Wouldn't you know it. In *She Loves Me Not* (1934) Princeton student Bing falls for Kitty Carlisle, the daughter of the Dean. And Bing knocks the Dean unconscious. Henry Stephenson was the Dean. Always the gentleman, Stephenson usually found himself cast in dramatic roles where a touch of class was called for. Parts in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1936), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1937) and *Marie Antoinette* (1938) were appropriate for someone educated at Rugby who went on to make his mark on the London and Broadway stage before entering films in the silent era. Stephenson retired after making *Challenge to Lassie* in 1949.

Inger Stevens with Bing in Man On Fire

STEVENS, INGER [Inger Stensland] (1934-1970). Actress. In 'The International Film Encyclopaedia' Ephraim Katz writes: "Her fractured romances with Bing Crosby (just before his last marriage) and a famous married star contributed to the depression that led her to attempted suicide in 1959, after which she remained blind for two weeks". True or false? We'll probably never know because she died of an overdose of barbiturates at the age of 36. Certainly Bing approved her casting as his leading lady in her film debut in *Man on Fire* (1957). Before that she'd had little acting success. She ran away from home at the age of 16 and made her showbusiness debut in burlesque in Kansas City. By then burlesque was dying on its feet and so she went to New York and worked as a chorus girl. Television gave her an opportunity to play to a wider audience, albeit that was mainly appearing in commercials. The year before making *Man on Fire* she made her Broadway debut in the appropriately titled "Debut". It was a flop. At sometime during her attempts to make a living in showbusiness she came to the attention of Bing. After her only Crosby film she got

some fine parts in *Cry Terror, The Buccaneer* and *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*, all made before 1960. In 1961 she secretly married Ike Jones, a black musician. Throughout the 1960s she continued to be cast in popular films. In 1968 she had substantial parts in four box-office winners: *Firecreek, Madigan, 5 Card Stud* and *Hang 'Em High*. Then two years later it was all over.

STEVENS, RISE (1913-) Opera singer who made the occasional film. As Genevieve Linden in *Going My Way* (1944) she played in a touching scene with Bing when she met him backstage at the opera. She had been appearing in *Carmen* at the theatre and realised why their friendship had ceased on seeing his clerical garb when he removed his overcoat. It was rare for a baritone and a contralto to share vocals but Bing and Rise managed with "Ave Maria" in *Going My Way*. Rise Stevens appeared on screen in two other films - *The Chocolate Soldier* (1941) and *Carnegie Hall* (1947) - and contributed her voice only to the cartoon *Journey Back to Oz* in 1974.

STEVENS, STELLA (1936-) Actress. If you look out for her you can spot Stella Stevens making her film debut as a chorus girl in *Say One For Me* (1959). It was a small part but it led immediately to semi-stardom as Appassionata von Climax in *L'il Abner*, released later that same year. Her decade as a box-office name was the 1960s. She was with Bobby Darin in *Too Late Blues* in 1962, with Jerry Lewis in *The Nutty Professor* the following year and with Dean Martin in *The Silencers* in 1966. Before movies she had been a 'Playboy' centrefold but she proved she had more to offer than glamour when she went on to produce and direct a documentary film in 1979. Her acting career continued via television.

STEWART, DONALD OGDEN (1894-1980). Screenwriter, playwright, actor and novelist. He was responsible for the screenplay of *Going Hollywood* (1934), Bing's most successful film to that date. It was his sophisticated dialogue for *The Philadelphia Story* (1939) that won him an Oscar. That film formed the basis of *High Society* (1956). Stewart's films were invariably good box-office as well as receiving critical acclaim. He either wrote or collaborated on such screenplays as *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (1934), *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1937), *Life with Father* (1947) and *Edward My Son* (1949). After that last film his career came to a sudden halt for the same reason as that of several other Hollywood talents. He was blacklisted because he had been a member of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League and was regarded as a communist sympathiser. Stewart simply packed his bags, moved to London, wrote a couple of screenplays (one using the alias Gilbert Holland) and published a revealing autobiography in 1970.

STILL THE BLUEBIRD SINGS Song. The final number featured in *The Star Maker* (1939). Bing is joined by a troupe of children for the song Johnny Burke and Jimmy Manaco composed specifically for the film.

STOLL, GEORGE (1905-1985) Musical director and conductor. For the two 1930s films which Bing made outside his Paramount contract for Major Pictures, Stoll was billed as musical director. However, both *Pennies from Heaven* (1936) and *Doctor Rhythm* (1938) used John Scott Trotter for Bing's musical arrangements. Both of those films were early assignments for Stoll. He had worked mainly in radio up until that point. Bing had worked with him in the recording studio where his billing on 78 releases named him Georgie Stoll. His last work on Crosby recordings as orchestra leader was for the Decca sessions of the songs from *Pennies from Heaven* which were issued to tie in with the release of the film. As soon as he had completed his two Major films with Bing he was signed up by M-G-M and it was with that studio that he did his best work. *Strike Up The Band* (1940), *Meet Me In St. Louis* (1944) and *The Student Prince* (1954) are some of his successes. He deserved the Oscar he won for his musical direction on *Anchors Aweigh* (1945). Stoll was also nominated for an Oscar on seven other occasions.

STONE, GEORGE E. [George Stein] (1903-1967) 5' 3" small and usually cast as a gangster type he appeared as Shorty in his one Bing picture, *Rhythm on the Range* (1936). By then he had been in films for twenty years having graduated from vaudeville to movies when a teenager. He made well over two hundred films and had regular roles as The Runt in the Boston Blackie series. Because he made Runyonesque characters his speciality it was only right that he bowed out of big screen performances with *Pocketful of Miracles* in 1961.

STORMY WEATHER Song. We are only treated to a snatch of this Ted Koehler-Harold Arlen composition in *We're Not Dressing* (1934). That's hardly surprising considering it formed part of Bing's "I Positively Refuse to Sing" medley. And Bing positively refused to record it until over thirty years later when it was included on the set of standards issued by the Longines Symphonette Society.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER Song. One of two Mack Gordon-Harry Revel songs performed by Bing in *She Loves Me Not* (1934). In that film Bing was cast in the role of the song's composer and Kitty Carlisle "played" the piano whilst duetting it with Bing.

STRAUSS, JOHANN (1804-1849) Austrian composer, conductor and violinist. Johnny Burke's "collaborator" on the song "The Emperor Waltz" from the 1948 film of the same name. Bing shows off his versatility by singing it to Joan Fontaine at the same time as dancing with her at the film's conclusion.

STRUSS, KARL (1886-1981) Director of photography. Struss was behind the camera on nine Bing pictures made between 1934 and 1939. They were *Here is my Heart* (1935), *Two for Tonight* (1935), *Anything Goes* (1936), *Rhythm on the Range* (1936), *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), *Double or Nothing* (1937), *Sing You Sinners* (1938), *Paris Honeymoon* (1939) and *The Star Maker* (1939). Struss was hired by Cecil B. DeMille in 1919 after DeMille had been impressed by his portrait and magazine advertising work. He shot his first film the following year. He joined Paramount in 1931 and remained with that studio until the end of the 1940s. One of his first assignments for that studio was *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) where the transformation of Fredric March from man to monster was brilliantly conceived. He retired in 1959 after shooting *The Rebel Set*, leaving behind him an impressive body of work to testify to his innovative technical inspirations. Struss won an Oscar for Best Cinematography for *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927) which he shared with Charles Rosher. He was also nominated on three other occasions including for the aforementioned *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Karl Struss and Bing discuss a lighting problem on the set of "Two for Tonight".

STYLE Song. Sammy Cahn and James Van Heusen wrote songs for *Robin and the 7 Hoods* (1964) which made excellent set pieces in that film and which also stood up well out of context. "Style" was one such number. Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra are bemused by Bing's appearance as Allen A. Dale and the three sing the song whilst Bing tries various outfits.

SUNDAY, MONDAY OR ALWAYS Song. Cinemagoers in the mid 1940s had two opportunities to hear this Johnny Burke-James Van Heusen composition in a Crosby picture. Or three if you count the reprise featured in *Dixie* in 1943. That film opened with Bing serenading Marjorie Reynolds in a garden setting and included a scene towards the end when Bing and his theatrical company performed it on stage. It was again used as a song opener for *Road to Utopia* (1946) when Bing was heard singing it off screen before making his debut with a couple of girls.

SUNSHINE CAKE Song. And yet again Burke and Van Heusen came up trumps when they wrote this one to be featured in *Riding High* (1950). This was the one that the audience whistled when they left the cinema. It is a sheer delight to watch the sequence where Bing, Coleen Gray and Clarence Muse sing it in a sequence where the accompaniment consists of whatever kitchen utensils are to hand.

SURE THING, A Song. That same picture (*Riding High)* opened with Burke and Van Heusen's "A Sure Thing". Bing sang it whilst dressing for dinner. By no means the best of B and Van H. but pleasant enough.

SUTHERLAND, A. EDWARD (1895-1973) Eddie Sutherland directed three Crosby films. They were *Too Much Harmony* (1933), *Mississippi* (1935) and *Dixie* (1943). *Mississippi* was the most typical assignment of the three because Sutherland brought out the best of W. C. Fields' variable film performances. Sutherland entered movies from vaudeville and was a stuntman before turning director in the mid 1920s. He rarely tackled major screen dramas but was regarded as reliable and efficient. Those qualities no doubt impressed Bing who hired him to direct the 'Bing Crosby Production' of *Abie's Irish Rose* in 1946. By then Sutherland must have realised that at the age of fifty he was unlikely to be offered prestige assignments. He only directed one more film - *Bermuda Affair* in 1956 - and spent the rest of his working life directing and producing for television.

SUTTON, GRADY (1906-1995) Character actor who mainly played comedy roles. In 1933 he could just about pass as a freshman in *College Humor* (1933). Four years later he had graduated and played the son of J. P. Todhunter, the pineapple company head in *Waikiki Wedding* (1937). Finally, in 1954, he was the guest of Major General Tom Waverly in *White Christmas*. In that triple bill of Crosby pictures it is doubtful if he uttered more than a dozen lines. Although he had top billing in a series of early thirties comedy shorts he never made it beyond playing slow witted yokels in a film career that ended with *Rock 'n' Roll High School* in 1979. His biggest breaks occurred when he was the butt of W. C. Fields' humour from *The Pharmacist* (1932) through to *The Bank Dick* (1940).

SWANEE RIVER Song. This Stephen Foster composition created a rift between Bing and Lorenz Hart. Hart and Richard Rodgers were contracted by Paramount to write the songs for *Mississippi* (1935). Hart didn't like it when Bing insisted that "Swanee River" was used in a sequence when Bing and a chorus of children perform it for General Rumford (Claude Gillingwater). After recording the songs from *Mississippi* Bing avoided recording any song with Hart lyrics until 1942. That was the year before Hart died and it was a patriotic war time song ("The Bombardier Song") which resulted in Bing's change of h(e)art. "Swanee River" was used again in *Road to Rio* (1948) when it was interpolated into "Apalachicola, FLA" as part of a comedy song routine performed by Hope and Crosby.

SWEET IS THE WORD FOR YOU Song. In *Waikiki Wedding* (1937) audiences had the opportunity of hearing this Leo Robin-Ralph Rainger song performed by the film's two leads. Bing sang it whilst on board a boat and Shirley Ross performed it in a sequence taking place the following morning.
But the most famous "sweet" song from that film was the Academy Award winning.....

SWEET LEILANI It was only at Bing's insistence that it was included in the film. Bing had heard it whilst taking a holiday with Dixie. They were in Hawaii and met Harry Owens who fronted the orchestra at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. Owens used it as his signature tune, having composed it in 1934 when his daughter Leilani was born. At first Owens didn't want the song to go out of his control. He must have been pleased when the composer royalties started to arrive after it became Bing's first million selling disc. In the film the song fulfilled its original purpose because Bing sang it to a little Hawaiian girl.

Keith Parkinson

Sing You Sinners

His name was Sam Coslow. He was a songwriter, usually providing the words. He was also a very early Hollywood promoter of Bing Crosby.

At Paramount in 1930, Coslow argued that the studio should hire Crosby as the leading man for one of its sound musicals. Soon, he helped write songs that made a star of Bing in the early '30s. Later, he provided what became the title for one of Bing's several "breakthrough" films. Then, at the peak of Bing's movie career, Coslow put together what may or may not be a Crosby musical, depending on your point of view.

Sam Coslow (1902-1982) said he was just five months older than Bing Crosby. Coslow first hit Broadway in 1918, with a published title song for "Daddies," a successful comedy. He wrote the number with Abel Green, who was to become the longtime editor of *Variety*. According to their accounts, Green was 18 at the time and Coslow was only 16—two of the rare teenagers to score as writers for Broadway.

Coslow continued as a successful lyricist of songs and shows in the 1920s. Toward the end of the decade, he conceived, wrote and sang in brief musical shows for theaters, to be performed between showings of feature films. He sold the concept to Paramount, which owned theaters in New York. Soon he sold Paramount the song publishing company he and a colleague, Larry Spier, had formed. Paramount then imported Coslow to Hollywood, as the first of the studio's staff songwriters in the sound era.

He saw Bing's performance in Universal's "King of Jazz," built around Paul Whiteman. Coslow knew Whiteman in New York, and he was aware of Bing's talent. In fact, the enterprising Coslow had worked his way onto Whiteman's radio show in February, 1930. Sam collected people and no doubt talked with Bing, then still one of Whiteman's Rhythm Boys—although doing occasional solo numbers.

Coslow and Arthur Johnston, who wrote the music, had been assigned by Paramount to write the songs for *Honey*, a 1930 musical designed around its most popular young star, Nancy Carroll. Nancy Carroll had appeared on the Whiteman program in 1929 and probably encountered Bing there. Coslow urged Paramount to hire Bing as the male lead in *Honey*. According to Gary Giddins, Bing wanted the same $200 a week he was getting as one of the Rhythm Boys. The deal seemed set. Then abruptly, it was off.

Instead, the studio cast Stanley Smith, a bland tenor with limited star quality. He had a few leads in early musicals and even had a small part in *King of Jazz*. Crosby blamed Whiteman for killing his opportunity, but that seems unlikely, Giddins notes, since Whiteman allowed Bing a chance to film a spot for a planned MGM musical, *March of Time*.

One of the songs Coslow helped write for *Honey* he entitled "Sing You Sinners." In the film it was performed first by a Southern revival choir, then by the nine-year-old mimic, Mitzi Green, and finally in more sophisticated fashion by the 19-year-old Lillian Roth (whose travails were to be wept over at MGM in the 1955 film, *I'll Cry Tomorrow*).

Stanley Smith was too mild a performer to have much impact with a hard-hitting song. But Bing, then in his jazz phase, would have been a natural to handle a swinging chorus or two of "Sing You Sinners." He lost the chance, and he kept clear of the song the rest of his life.

Bing went back to short subjects and brief spots in features, including his first opportunity at Paramount in *Confessions of a Co-ed*.

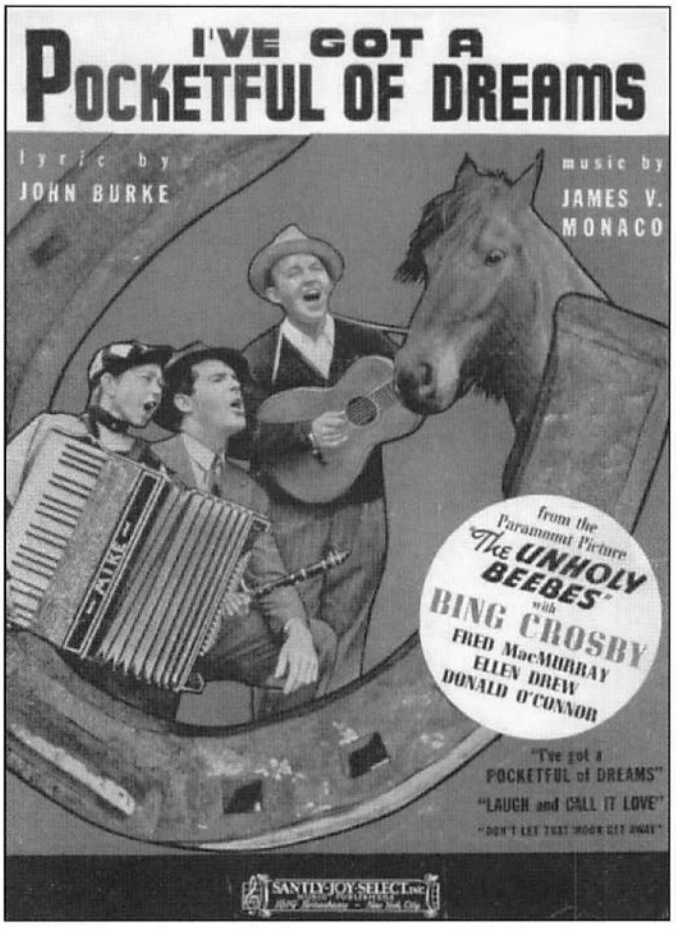
And there were records. In May of 1931, he recorded his 109th song - "Just One More Chance" -and he and the song became smash hits. Who wrote the

words? Sam Coslow. Arthur Johnston provided the music.

As the Crosby movie career blossomed, Coslow and Johnston supplied him (and Paramount) with more songs that helped propel Bing to the top of public consciousness: "Thanks," "Learn to Croon," "Down the Old Ox Road," among others. For a 1933 film, they gave him a chance to show an emotional, intense, somewhat mournful, style in "Black Moonlight" ("You make the lights of Harlem duller..."). He didn't get to sing it in the film, but he did record it, in the dramatic fashion of his earlier "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" and his later "Temptation." As time went on, crooning proved more saleable and he tempered the emotion in his singing.

In 1936, Coslow contributed "Mr. Paganini" to Bing's hit film, *Rhythm on the Range* but it was sung by Martha Raye, not Crosby.

By 1938, Bing had reached the Top Ten list in film popularity. Paramount decided to switch gears. Crosby was cast not as the flashy crooner adored by women but as the shiftless brother who betrayed his family. That breakthrough suggested to critics that Crosby might be able to act, at least a little bit. Bing said he was just playing himself.



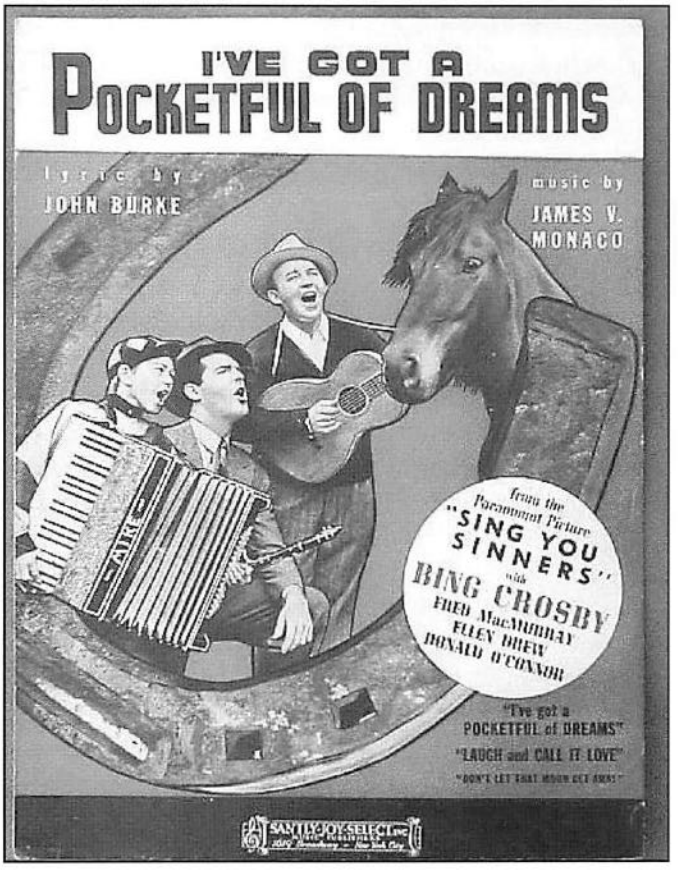
As the film neared release, it was titled *The Unholy Beebes*. Paramount gave its song publishing company the signal to sell the sheet music under that title.

Bing apparently didn't mind being called unholy. He admired the title, according to Gary Giddins. But some at Paramount who had to sell the product did not. Their obvious feeling was that a Crosby film—even an untypical one—should bear a title promising music and fun. Still, they didn't want to abandon the "unholy" aspect; it warned audiences that this was a different type of Crosby film.

The studio brass decided to make a last-minute change. Someone recalled the song Sam Coslow had written for Paramount eight years earlier, "Sing You Sinners." That combined the sense of music with the "unholy" aspect, and all in three words that could fit on a marquee. The change was made. The sheet music was hastily reprinted, although some circulated under the old name.

Whether the alert Coslow came up with the ideal title is unknown but it seems a possibility, considering his readiness to speak up and his lengthy status as an insider at Paramount. A gossip column of the time claimed that Bing was actually lobbying for the new title, not against it. That probably was a rumor spread by Paramount to cover up any suggestion that Bing was uneasy about the last-minute change.

The title worked. The film worked. The new, "unholy" Bing went on display and audiences lapped him up, as always. But Bing hadn't been pushed into the studio to make a last-minute recording of the song, to be added to the picture. He stayed away. The movie boasted a title tune that was not included in the film.



That was not quite the end of Coslow and Crosby. Bing had made, and continued to make, new recordings of the early Coslow numbers that had done so much for him. Meanwhile, the songwriter—a budding

entrepreneur—edged over into producing films, and won an Academy Award in 1944 for one of his two-reel music shorts. He developed "Soundies" to be played in juke boxes with small screens.

By 1945, Paramount sought to boost the career of Eddie Bracken as a leading comedian. Hence, *Out of This World*. Sam Coslow wrote the story and signed on as producer. The gimmick was to have Bracken mouth several songs sung by Bing, then at the peak of his movie fame. Bing agreed to record three numbers, including one of several that Coslow had helped write.

Bing would not make even a cameo appearance in the movie. Instead he required Paramount to find a spot in it for his four sons. The boys would each be paid—the unannounced payments claimed to be anywhere from $6,500 to $50,000. Bing took no money for himself, but he wound up with three more tunes to record for Decca and to use in radio work. The songs were routine, as was the singing, but Bing's connection gave the film the limited impact it had. Whether it qualifies as a Crosby musical seems doubtful. There is some suggestion that during the production Coslow made a brief appearance on Bing's radio show to recall some of his early songs for Bing, but that seems unclear.

Coslow went on to other business ventures, and to songs for Sinatra and Dean Martin. He left Bing behind. Or vice versa.

Sam Coslow was only one of the Hollywood types whose work helped make Bing the star he became. But Coslow recognized the potential early on. He was involved at the beginning of the great years, which counts for something.

Bob Achorn

The celebrities will shine at Starfair

Deborah Nicol writing in *The Desert Sun* of December 7, 2007 about the local film festival, mentioned Rhonda Fleming.

With films ranging from cross-dressing shenanigans to Hitchcock thrillers to medieval musicals, the Starfair Palm Springs Classic Film Festival which begins today (December 7) and runs through Monday, does not lack in variety.

. . . Rhonda Fleming had a similar victual discovery that brought her to Hitchcock.

After David O. Selznick's talent scout, Henry Wilson, propositioned her ("Young lady, have you ever thought of being in motion pictures?"), Fleming was having lunch in the studio commissary. After watching her eat, studio men whispered in Wilson's ear, "Never mind the screen test, just sign her." A week later, she was offered her first major film role in Hitchcock's *Spellbound*.

"It's a Cinderella story because I didn't ask for it," said Fleming. "I didn't pound the pavement."

In fact, she had never considered acting. She wanted to sing like her idol, Deanna Durbin. She was given voice lessons but never made musicals - until the day that Durbin went to France and never came back. Fleming auditioned for the role intended for Durbin, with the one man her singing coach had told her not to imitate - Bing Crosby.

"My coach wanted me to sing on note as the composer intended." said Fleming. "Not bu-bu-bu-buh like Bing Crosby."

Fleming won the role opposite the crooner for the 1949 musical, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. He never crowded the camera but would allow her ample screen time. Crosby shared opening titles with her though she had previously only been a character actress. Recalling his generosity, Fleming said, "He was one of my favorite guys in the world."

Rhonda is serenaded by her favorite guy.

When Crosby brought frequent costar Bob Hope to the set, he saw Fleming and said, "Well, Bing, if you can use her, I can too," and cast her in his next film, *The Great Lover*.

"Even now I'm awestruck for the fact that God blessed me so much with these breaks," Fleming said. And she is working to return the favor.

Inspired by her sister Beverly's experience with cancer, she helped found Stop Cancer and established UCLA's Rhonda Fleming Clinic for Women's Comprehensive Care and the Rhonda Fleming Resource Center for Women with Cancer. Presently, she supports P.A.T.H. (People Assisting the Homeless) and will be donating her proceeds to the organization.

"I'm so grateful that I can use what name value I have," said Fleming. "My heart was always in helping other people."

Deborah Nicol

Bing In Vancouver

Back in 2001, we printed an article called *BC in BC* in issue #129 which described how Bing came to be in Vancouver in 1948 to raise funds for the Sunset Community Centre. Well, the years have passed and a new Centre has now been built. The President of the Committee behind it, Walter Schultz, published an article on December 20, 2007 reminding everyone who had helped to get the project off the ground in the first place.

With this week's historic opening of the new Sunset Community Centre, I wanted to remind people of how the original community centre was built.

It started back in 1945 when the Sunset Community Association formed to begin working on the physical plans for a new community centre for the Sunset area. By 1947 the Sunset Community Association via its many fund raising activities, had only raised $20,000 of its goal of $125,000 to build a new community centre.

Early in the fall of 1947, the Directors felt that the time had come for the Association to take a dramatic step to put the fundraising drive over the top. The resulting decision was to send their President, Mr. Stan Thomas to Hollywood in an effort to meet with the famous entertainer Bing Crosby in the hope that he might be persuaded to come to Vancouver to stage a benefit show on behalf of the Sunset Community Centre.

You need to understand that in 1947 Bing was the number one recording star in the world, his movies sold more tickets at the box office than any other movie star and his radio show was the most popular show in all of North America. Bing was a world class star in three separate entertainment disciplines. I can't think of another entertainer today who could equal Bing's accomplishments. And yet here was Mr. Thomas the president of a small community association who successfully convinced the world's greatest entertainer at the time, to come to Vancouver to raise funds for a small community centre in South Vancouver.

The Bing Crosby radio show was held in Vancouver on September 22nd. 1948 at the Forum where 9,000 fans enjoyed Bing's benefit show and approximately $26,000 was raised for the building fund via that single performance. Bing of course was the toast of Vancouver for that week in September and every politician clamored to get their picture taken with him. Bing Crosby also visited the site of the proposed community centre and climbed aboard a bulldozer, skillfully turned a wide swath, symbolic of the first official sod turning on the Centre site. Bing even sang "Blue Skies" during the event, amid a constant Vancouver downpour, to a crowd of delighted fans.

The Sunset Community Association had agreed to reimburse all the traveling expenses incurred by Bing and his party during their trip from Hollywood; however while at the train station preparing to leave Vancouver, Bing would not accept one cent towards the cost, and tore up the Association's cheque. This generous gift is forever remembered in the erection of the original community centre. Without the generous support of Bing Crosby and the efforts of Stan Thomas the first Sunset Community Centre would never have been built. The Sunset Memorial Community Centre was officially opened, on Friday September 29th. 1950 with Bing Crosby opening the building via a long distance telephone call from San Francisco. The audience heard the crooner as he talked with Vancouver Mayor Charles Thompson and retiring Sunset President Stan Thomas.

Bing Crosby breaking ground - Sunset Community Centre, Sept. 21, 1948.

It has been over sixty years since that small group of dedicated community members, had a vision to build a new community centre in South Vancouver. Through their hard work and dedication they successfully built the original Sunset Memorial Community Centre. With the opening of the new Sunset Community Centre this month, we honour those committed volunteers along with Bing Crosby for all they gave to our community, so many years ago.

Walter Schultz

(Editor: Mr. Schultz tells me that there was a time capsule in the old centre building which might contain some Bing items. There is a rumour that there is a small film clip of the Crosby radio show from Vancouver in the capsule. The capsule has been retrieved but not yet opened as it is airtight and welded closed. The Vancouver Archives have it in their possession and are trying to determine the safest way to open it without damaging the contents. Cutting it open will apply heat which could burn up the contents. Mr. Schultz will keep us informed.)

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Frank Startup, Cirencester, Glos., UK

. . . I realise that it's very early for a Christmas card, but, trawling through various websites in a bid to find some unusual cards for this year, I came across this on a website which seems to specialise in cards and products with rather a robust sense of humour aimed primarily, I would imagine, at a younger demographic than I represent.

I have bought several for friends and relatives, and am sending this to you early in case you want to do the same - the web site's www.kissmekwik.co.uk. It's rather a silly and obvious joke, but it's rather good to think that Bing's face might be making an appearance in student common rooms up and down the country this year.

(Editor: Frank's letter was received just after our winter issue went to press but hopefully the card will be available again this year.)

Gary Giddins, New York, USA - by email.

. . . One reason I'd like to get the book done is to be sure that Kathryn can read it. It's true she didn't help with the first volume, but I understood that—she had no reason not to expect another 'Hollow Man'. But she's been incredibly generous to me since 'Pocketful' came out, inviting me to stay at the mansion and giving me access to thousands of documents I would never otherwise have seen, including papers that put Bing's WW2 work in a light that will surprise and impress even his most ardent admirers. She has also allowed me to see papers relating to Bing's relationship to his sons that aren't as flattering and she hasn't asked me to suppress a thing. Thanks to her, Vol. 2 is coming alive in ways I never expected."

(Editor: Very encouraging. This will be a very important book as it should correct the negative images of Bing created by the 'Hollow Man' and Gary Crosby's book. Also, it will undoubtedly give Bing's posthumous career a real lift. We are right behind you, Gary!)

Ian Matheson, by email from Vancouver, Canada.

. . . Glad to see the article on John Scott Trotter. He is, I feel, a bit undervalued as a musician and incidentally a record producer. He helped produce some great jazz recordings in New York for Brunswick and Vocalion before he signed on with Bing that featured members of the Ellington and Chick Webb bands and I believe he may been the producer on some of the famous Teddy Wilson/Billie Holiday sessions.

As well, his arranging is often given short shrift by listeners today, but one should listen to the air checks of some of the same tunes recorded commercially. My impression is that Decca wanted to generally keep orchestra budgets small (even on Crosby sessions) as the orchestras for the Kraft shows (and all the others with Trotter) feature a full orchestra - no skimping on instrumentation. Trotter likely commissioned the very modern sounding arrangements you heard on Bing's radio shows from the mid-1940's onward from the likes of Billy May and Johnny Richards. Richards recorded (as a saxophonist) on air and in the studio with Bing and Trotter under his original name - John Cascales! He was a truly innovative arranger and Trotter showed excellent taste in using work by Richards and Billy May. I'd love to know who else was involved as an arranger on the numerous Crosby shows. In my book, at least, Trotter was a great arranger himself and at his best (i.e. "The Natural Thing To Do") could extract an enormous amount of colour from an orchestra.

Regarding JST, I'd love to find out what became of all the scores he provided for Bing over the years. Given that he preserved all those transcriptions of Kraft Music Hall shows, maybe the actual written music got preserved as well. I know that he often gets a "bad rap" for writing in a bland and functional fashion, I think that may reflect the lack of time (and budget) he was given - especially by Decca. Overall, his approach to how he

created settings for Bing's voice was an improvement on some of Bing's earlier accompanists. Even some of the KMH shows with the Jimmy Dorsey band find Bing's voice being swamped by thick saxophone section backgrounds and busy arrangements. My one wish was that Bill Challis, who wrote SO well for Bing when he was with Paul Whiteman, had done more work for Bing after he left Whiteman. I asked Bill about this in 1991 and he implied that if Jack Kapp didn't go for you (and Kapp had very rigid likes and dislikes), you weren't likely to have a chance to work for Bing (or anyone else on Decca records). Too bad, as Bill's vocal arrangements for Artie Shaw (c.1941) and Glen Grey (c.1944-46) are wonderful and just as musical as those he wrote when he was involved with the Whiteman band.

Keith Parkinson, St. Helens, UK

Martin McQuade impressed me once again by the depth of research undertaken to produce his article on the Rhythmaires etc. in issue 147 of BING. It is the originality as opposed to the rehashing of Crosbyana that keeps our interest alive. Two recent examples are the BBC Radio 2 series "The Bing Crosby Trail" and the book "Going My Way".

The radio series was a pleasant surprise because Michael Freedland was never a probing programme compiler. We must thank Barbra Paskin for her work Stateside which provided Freedland with interview opportunities.

I've realised for some time that it is easier to generate publicity about Bing via the local and regional press than through a national publication. Well done to Diane Welch and Pete Cakanic. Pete was wrong in one respect when he referred to Bing as the first white scat singer. That credit is due to Cliff Edwards. Bing cites Edwards (Ukulele Ike) as one of his influences.

Norman Wolfe, by email from Cumming, Georgia, USA

I took the Leeds test and got eight right (missed Maxwell and 'Let It Snow'). I hope the prize is not an 8x10 glossy of the editor!

"Here's That Rainy Day" is a nice song, isn't it? I had completely forgotten it, in fact am having trouble remembering all of it this morning. . . that's rare for me. I seldom forget a lyric. I didn't realize Johnny Burke wrote it. He did so much banal stuff and I am always surprised when he is good (and he can be very good). Many years ago, I had a friend who sang in a club along Daytona Beach. Red-haired, Irish girl with one of those husky, whiskey voices (probably Jameson's) and when I would drop by she would do stuff I liked ("Shadow Of Your Smile", "When Sunny Gets Blue", "Midnight Sun" etc) and "Rainy Day" was one of her songs. The mention of it in the magazine took me back aways as only old songs can. Incidentally, Como's version is my favorite of "Shadow Of Your Smile". Don't you love that imagery? Good writing.

Alf Ward, Sheffield, UK

I must have read our lovely BING winter issue No. 147 at least three times. The article on Laurel and Hardy fascinated me. I used to watch them at the pictures in the silent days (I'm 88). It was interesting to know that Stan was a fan of Morton Downey. I was too and I used to listen to him singing his lovely Irish songs from Radio Luxembourg before the war. I particularly liked his signature song "Danny Boy".

As you know, I lost all my Bing collection but I've had marvellous help from people such as Michael Crampton, Arthur Blood, Trevor Wagstaff, Mrs. Moore and yourself, all of whom have sent me lots of Bing material. Arthur not only sent me a lovely letter but also two Christmas CDs on cassette. I played these in the lounge of our Residential Home and nearly all the ladies came round with nice comments. They joined in singing some of the carols too. I listen to Bing day and night. Sometimes listening to Bing, tears well up in my eyes – tears of joy!

Thanks again for a great magazine.

(Editor: Sadly, Alf passed away on January 12 but he knew that we were going to publish his letter. He was a Second World War veteran and when he moved to his Residential Home his Coldstream Guards regimental tie went astray. Arrangements were made for the Coldstream Guards to present him with a new tie and the photo [courtesy of The Star] shows Alf with Sgt Simon Thompson who made the presentation.

Some months ago I was in touch with Sam Irvin who is writing a book about Kay Thompson. You may find his email interesting...

Sam Irvin, by email from Van Nuys, California, USA. (email: SIrvinProd@aol.com)

. . . I had Kraft on the brain because I just interviewed Alice Ludes of the Music Maids. She just turned 96 on December 20! Kay Thompson did vocal

arrangements and coached the Music Maids beginning around 1943 and she hired the girls regularly—as a group and as individuals—to sing in her large choruses at M-G-M for all the big musicals. Kay also used the Music Maids, along with the Williams Brothers (young Andy and his brothers) as her own backup singers on radio from 1943 to 1947. (Of course, I have heard the 1947 Philco show with Kay Thompson and the Williams Brothers—and Peter Lorre—which is a lot of fun; it was done during Kay's breakthrough gig at Ciro's that made her the top nightclub attraction in the country for years.)

I have not uncovered any recordings of the Woodbury shows that Kay appeared on (sooooo frustrating!), but I have pieced together quite a mosaic of behind-the-scenes politics (embellishing on your invaluable "Bing Crosby: Day by Day" information which got me pointed in the right direction for further stones to uncover) which will be of great interest to you and Bing fans when it is finished. Unfortunately, that may be a while. I'm already eight-years-and-counting, with no end in sight! Sheesh. (I do have a day job directing and/or producing movies and TV—I was one of the producers of the Oscar winning movie, *Gods & Monsters*, etc.—so, I have to put my Thompson book on the back burner from time to time.)

Bing adored Kay. When she departed M-G-M in 1947 to form her nightclub act, "Kay Thompson and the Williams Brothers," Bing was a repeat ringsider on countless occasions (highly unusual because he tended to be a homebody and was not really part of that nightclub party crowd). He first showed up very casually, without his toupee, but Kay's audience was so star-studded, it was like the Academy Awards every night. So naturally, press photographers were out in force taking pictures of everybody, Bing included—which made him very angry. From then on, he showed up fully toupee'd.

He campaigned for Kay to be his leading lady in an untitled picture in 1948 that never got made, and then he tried to have her cast in *Mr. Music*, but Paramount favored contract player Nancy Olson who was getting a big studio push on the heels of her breakthrough in *Sunset Boulevard*.

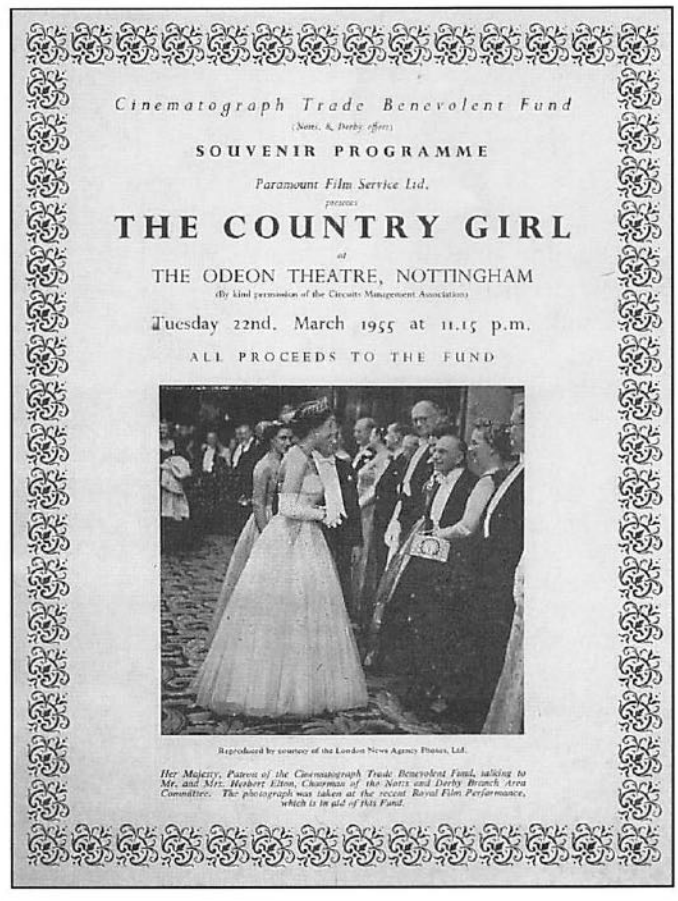
Kay was also very friendly with Al Rinker; she hired him to be a member of her "Kay Thompson and the Rhythm Singers" on CBS Chesterfield shows in 1936 (backed by Andre Kostelanetz & His Orchestra) and 1937 (backed by Hal Kemp's band).

Kay met Lennie Hayton in 1933 when they both were doing Bing's Woodbury shows—and they forged a very lasting friendship. Kay and Lennie originated 'The Hit Parade' in 1935 on NBC, and in the 1940s, Kay and Lennie worked together on many M-G-M musicals. Kay is responsible for playing cupid between Lennie and Lena Horne. And in 1956, Kay convinced Lennie to take a break from Lena's tour to conduct the band for her Playhouse 90 adaptation of *Eloise* on CBS-TV. Kay later coached Lena's daughter, Gail, for her Broadway debut in 1960.

So, many seeds were rooted during those few weeks with Bing on the Woodbury shows! I have interviewed over 150 friends and colleagues of Kay but there always seems to be somebody else lurking about—like Alice Ludes, for instance. I had no idea she was still alive! If there are any other obscure people that you think might have known Kay, I'm all ears.

Ken Heason, Nottingham, UK

Whilst rummaging 'among my souvenirs' the other day, I found the enclosed programme of a midnight premiere of *The Country Girl* I attended on March 22, 1955 at the Odeon in Nottingham. It set me thinking, why Bing's film for this important event? Was it the subject matter of the old washed-up actor to arouse sympathy for the Cinematograph Charity or a coincidence?



Cinematograph Trade Benevolent Fund

(Notts. & Derby. Area)

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

Paramount Film Service Ltd.

presents

THE COUNTRY GIRL

at

THE ODEON THEATRE, NOTTINGHAM

(By kind permission of the Circuits Management Association)

Tuesday 22nd. March 1955 at 11.15 p.m.

ALL PROCEEDS TO THE FUND

Reproduced by courtesy of the London News Agency Photos, Ltd.

Her Majesty, Patron of the Cinematograph Trade Benevolent Fund, talking to Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Elton, Chairman of the Notts and Derby Branch Area Committee. The photograph was taken at the recent Royal Film Performance, which is in aid of this Fund.

I know you can't answer that, but do you know whether the film was on general release (at this date) in the UK? I can't remember it being shown again at the Odeon, although my wife Mavis thinks she saw it at the Gaumont cinema.

I wonder of any others of your readers have attended midnight showings of Bing's new films? I can imagine the comments from the Civic dignitaries losing sleep over a Bing Crosby film!

(Editor: Reference to Keith Parkinson gave me the information that the film went on general release in the

UK on April 11, 1955 so Ken stole a march on the rest of England by seeing it at the midnight premiere.

Next, here's a nice letter Wig received recently.)

Barry Birch, Winnipeg, Canada

I wrote to you last January, just to let you know that a nostalgia radio station was getting started in Winnipeg to fill a gap in radio entertainment. The station is manned by volunteers and is now in its 2nd year of broadcasting. I have been volunteering as an announcer (no previous experience), as I am retired from an accounting background. Working at the radio station not only gives me an opportunity to play Bing Crosby music, but also to provide Bing's music for other announcers to play.

In Canada, very low powered radio stations are allowed to broadcast for 28 days a month in recognition of special events. We broadcast at a power of 40 watts and we don't have any Canadian Content rules. We must move every month to the site of the special event. For example we are broadcasting this month on behalf of the Alzheimer's' Awareness Month. We have a big telephone expense moving telephone lines from our studio to the transmitter every month.

We don't have a big audience, and we don't have any money to advertise, but we are keeping Bing's legacy alive. Last October I played several of Bing's songs and paid tribute to Bing's career. In December, I was able to play most of Bing's Christmas music, thanks to your 'Voice Of Christmas' CD. One night we played the last concert that Bing recorded in London, England. To me, it's a real pleasure to continue to play the music of Bing for our listeners. We also play old radio shows every night for an hour and, of course, Bing is front and centre there.

One last note, the BING magazine continues to maintain a high level of production quality and the articles are always excellent. Thanks to everyone at the magazine.

Trevor Wagstaff, Hornchurch, Essex, UK

I was delighted with this year's entry in 'The Guinness Book Of Records' with Bing back in with "White Christmas" 50 million plus as a single.

Going back some years when the entry was 25 million, I felt this figure was vulnerable so I wrote year after year to increase it to over 30 million which they did after a long while. Then of course "Candle In The Wind" was quoted at 33 million and took its place for a while. Thank goodness, they've got it right now.

Being aware that the 'younger' generation is 'older' now, they know little about Bing's great contribution to the world of song and entertainment. I suggest we submit Bing's achievements for a full page entry in the Guinness tome.

(Editor: Trevor has done a great job with the Guinness people over the years and our thanks are due to him. He very kindly supplied me with a full page of statistics to support a presentation to the Guinness editor.

There was a discussion on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum some weeks ago about the sons of Bing's first marriage. Howard Crosby came in with some very worthwhile comments.)

Howard Crosby, as seen on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum

Why did my cousins have such difficult lives? This is probably the subject of a book, not an online post, but here goes.

Bing and Ted Crosby were both products of a strict upbringing by a stern Irish-Catholic mother and a Jesuit education. This gave them a grounding in reality that never left them. Neither of them ever missed Mass on Sunday, wherever they were. They never went to bed without saying their nightly prayers. Grandma Kate had drilled this into them.

But I think my cousins (Bing's older boys) growing up in a Hollywood fishbowl with an overworked father and a mother who had her own problems never really got that grounding. They never developed a strong sense of their own identity, and their own self worth. Uncle Bing tried to give it to them, making them work in the summer as ranch hands in Elko, for instance, but it just wasn't the same. They always returned to their pampered existence.

It just wasn't the same as getting up at 4am, delivering newspapers, then serving Mass at 6, then school, then mowing lawns or whatever other jobs could be found, giving most of the money earned to Kate for the household, then homework and chores until 9pm, then get up at 4 and do it all again. And for Christmas, they got an orange in their stocking. Period. This gave the young Crosby boys, Larry, Everett, Ted and Bing an inner strength as hard as steel. They knew they could survive almost anything, because they had. My cousins never got that feeling.

(Editor: Wow! That certainly puts things into perspective.)

John Bignell, Wembley, Middlesex, UK

What a terrific addition to my library of books on Bing – "Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture".

I found it quite fascinating, although much of it confirmed "under one roof" as it were many of Bing's activities.. I cannot imagine that anyone can come up with a biography of anyone whose life contained so many talents and interests so diverse and oursued with such success.

The editors, Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck, have done a mammoth task. How good to see Kathryn and you have even had pages to yourselves. I could find only one observation with which I disagreed and that was Mr. Raubicheck's contention that Crosby and Hope were "Hollywood's Greatest Comedy Team." Very flattering but honesty compels me to disagree. The

greatest comedy double act was Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. But to be compared with these supreme artistes is a very, very great compliment to Bing and Bob. I would welcome the views of members on my opinion regarding the greatest ever double act.

I have now received the final two CDs in the wonderful series "The Chronological Bing Crosby". There can be no words to describe the work John McNicholas put in over many years to complete this project. There are not enough superlatives in the dictionary to adequately praise him. Sadly, John did not receive the support from our membership at large that he deserved but we can only hope that Sepia Records will undertake the continuation of this chronological series.

Meanwhile I look forward to the April BING and wish you and yours all the best.

(Editor: Mr. Raubicheck's opinion on the greatest Hollywood comedy team was based on "box-office success, cultural impact, and genuine innovation." Certainly in terms of box-office success, Crosby and Hope far eclipsed Stan and Ollie but personal taste is another matter and John's opinion can only be respected. See Keeping Track for details of the Chronological series.)

Saturday essay:Brainwashed by Bing

The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review of November 24 last carried a nice little article by Colin McNickle.

December 1975. The week before Christmas. The abdominal pains were excruciating. My appendix, 17, decided to go south. As per usual with such things, it was 2:30 a.m.

Woke up the Old Man. He sat me in his well-worn La-Z-Boy recliner, apparently to time the length between my moans. When it became one long moan, I guess he figured it was time for an appendix to be born.

Out it came later that day at the hospital. And out of my mind I soon would be, thanks to my roommate's decision to watch a "White Christmas" TV movie marathon.

After a full day, I prayed that Bing Crosby and Rosemary Clooney would develop laryngitis. After the second day, I wondered why somebody couldn't break the legs of Danny Kaye and Vera-Ellen. By day three, I wanted the sheriff to foreclose on Gen. Tom Waverly's Pine Tree Inn.

I swore off the movie forever. But this brainwashing by Bing had worked. A few years later, flipping through the channels, I came across "White Christmas." Egads, I caught myself singing along. I even teared up when the good general saw that members of his old Army unit had given up their Christmas Eve to save him from financial ruin.

Today, I absolutely adore "White Christmas." And, yes, right on cue—"Attention!"—I still cry at the end.

Life's funny that way—lose an appendix but gain an enduring appreciation of something hokily comforting.

Colin McNickle

Bing's time in jail

We all know that Bing spent a period in jail in 1929 following a car crash, but we have never been able to find anything about it in the papers of the time. However Gary Hamann who has published several books of newspaper clippings of Bing has just uncovered the following extract:

> Scouting the Cinema
> Seems Paul Whiteman's band is having one heck of a trouble with automobiles. One of the Whiteman tooters smacked into a car recently and as a result was sentenced to 20 days in the Hollywood Police Station. A couple of the other boys had automotive trouble on their last visit here.
>
> Which reminds me. When there's a bad smash-up now, the police escort the offending driver(s) to a hospital. A medico pumps his (or her or their) stomach. Reason: to tell whether liquor participated in the smash.
>
> (Dorothy Herzog, *Los Angeles Evening Herald*, November 18, 1929)

The length of Bing's sentence varies from account to account and it's interesting to see it quoted as 20 days in the clipping.

Gary Hamann sent me another clipping which amused me.

> Recently comedian Bob Hope asked crooner Bing Crosby how he liked his performances. Bing said he liked them, but would send him a suggestion or two through the mail. When it arrived, Bob found it to be a Joe Miller Joke Book! Hope immediately sent a letter of thanks and said that he, too, would send a present through the mail. Shortly after, Bing started receiving a correspondence course on "How to Sing and Entertain Your Friends."
>
> (*Los Angeles Examiner*, November 6, 1938)

Gary Hamann's web site can be found at http://gdhamann.blogspot.com/ For a full list of his books, e-mail him at GDHamann@Juno.Com

BING ON THE BOX

TO SING LIKE BING

On December 25th 2007 and again on the 1st January 2008 [each programme being repeated] BBC Radio 4 aired a half hour, two-parter presented by Alyn Shipton in which he looked at the reign of the crooner, with Bing Crosby at its throne. The programme opened with Dean Martin's well known 1953 recording 'If I Could Sing Like Bing' and picked up the thread of Bing's unrivalled popularity before he came on the scene via the recordings and style of the likes of Gene Austin, who was the first major star, 'Whispering' Jack Smith, 'beautiful delivery', Cliff Edwards ['Ukelele Ike' later of Jiminy Cricket fame], Al Bowlly, 'he makes love to the microphone', Rudy Vallée and Russ Columbo. Comments from Gary Giddins, Will Friedwald, Spats Langham and Keith Nichols demonstrated the varying styles of crooning and scat singing and how those singers, Louis Armstrong and the Whiteman jazzmen influenced Bing's developing style.

In tracing Bing's career much the same pattern and dialogue of *The Bing Crosby Trail* was followed including the Buddy Bregman connection and Ken Barnes' dominating involvement in Bing's latter years. Similarly, Mary Crosby made another touching contribution in saying 'His contribution to the world is huge; but to me bigger'.

BBC Radio 4 is a prestigious programme and though not one of the high listener stations it does attract a worthy and intelligent audience who might well have been fascinated by and learnt a lot from this musical history of the world's most enduring and endearing crooner. Though for many of us the word 'crooner' is anathema, certainly where Bing is concerned!

Excerpts of Bing songs featured included: White Christmas, Louise, 'Tain't So, Honey, 'Tain't So, Mississippi Mud, June In January, Learn To Croon, It's Been A Long, Long Time, Don't Fence Me In, Gone Fishin', Nice Work If You Can Get It, There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About, What I Did For Love, Home On The Range.

PARKY

In the first of three special shows looking back over the years, that doyen of chat show hosts, **Michael Parkinson**, presented moments with very special guests including Bing from his 1975 programme. A clip of Bing singing 'I Love To Dance' was followed later by Bing and Parky singing 'The Pleasure Of Your Company'. With Mr. Parkinson was the contemporary singer Michael Bublé who recalled some family moments listening to Bing. Parkinson said what a nice man Bing was and how although they had a limousine lined up for him, Bing always got in a cab. When asked about this Bing said 'Michael, in the forty-seven years I've been coming to England I've never once had to pay for a cab. The cabbies always say for all the joy you've given me and my family the ride's on me. If they didn't recognize me I'd slide back the partition and hum a couple of bars of 'White Christmas' !'

On Boxing Day BBC1 screened a dramatization of Noel Streatfeild's classic children's book *Ballet Shoes*; a charming story of three sisters growing up in the 1930s. What makes it relevant here is that in the final scenes Bing's recording of 'The Very Thought Of You' was played all the way through!

With the highest viewing audience of any Christmas programme - 16,000,000 - the BBC's *Eastenders* featured two of Bing's Christmas songs this year. Very good exposure, but I hope all those viewers knew who they were hearing; in fact topping the poll on both the BBC and ITV Christmas song lists was 'White Christmas' so maybe they did.

In a local factory recently, wirelesses were churning out 'pop', when suddenly there's Bing singing 'Ac-cent-Chu-Ate The Positive'. Turned out to be an advert for an electricity company on Essex Fm, a commercial station. Positive – negative; very good, and well done NPower! On one of the *Cold Case* screenings Bing was heard singing 'It's Easy To Remember', not the first time this CBS-TV murder mystery series has included a Bing number. Ron Field in Morton, Washington saw another episode from the series in February about a murder that took place in 1943 in an airplane building factory. The story ended with Bing and the Andrews Sisters singing 'Don't Fence Me In' and virtually the whole song was played. Like the Scarlet Pimpernel, he's here, there, he's everywhere!

DEADLINES

The last posting for the Winter Issue of BING meant that some 30th Anniversary tributes didn't make it in time. Let's redress that omission by taking a look at some now.

For example, **Mike Carey** on his BBC Radio Derby programme devoted the entire broadcast of 'Memorable Melodies' to Bing with a very varied selection of material much of which would have been quite new to his listeners more used to 'the best of Bing' and the inevitable Christmas songs. There was the humorous sketch of how Bing and Bob Hope met up; Al Jolson introducing Bing singing 'Treasure Island' in 1935 on the opening night of the NBC network and from the KMH programme of 17th November 1938 that charming number 'The Lady On The Two Cent Stamp'. Very much later and from a different medium, more mature listeners would have recalled 'The Shell Song' on television but it might well have proved quite a novelty for Mike's younger audience. Always good to hear Bing's recording of Johnny Mercer's and Harry Warren's 'Jeepers Creepers' as it includes the verse, and Buddy Bregman's arrangement gives us this gentle, melodic introduction before swinging into full bore. Romantic ballads abounded, mostly from the 1940's which included Russ Morgan's unmistakable accompaniment

to Bing and Louanne Hogan's 'This Could Be For Ever'. Strangely, that song was their only duet especially as Ms Hogan had a lovely voice having dubbed for Jeanne Crain in *State Fair*. Which leads us into the male lead in that movie, Dick Haymes, here clowning with Bing and Jimmy Durante on Philco Radio Time on the 4th February 1948. Bing's vocal contribution to the war effort had considerable mention and musical illustration with one of his lengthy parodies of popular songs imploring his audience to buy War Bonds and support worthy charities. The programme concluded with some of the Bing and Perry Como TV duets. Two hours of Bing in fine and varied form from Mike Carey on Sunday 21st November. Mike can be found on 104.5, 95.3, 96 Fm and 1116 Am. Tune in if you can.

Similarly, **David Lowe**, BBC Radio Bristol, had some kind words and tuneful songs to acknowledge the three decades since Bing's passing. In all his twenty-six years as a broadcaster he'd never before played 'Way Back Home' saying what a lovely song it was.

Recorded by BING CROSBY with FRED WARING and his PENNSYLVANIANS on DECCA RECORDS
'WAY BACK HOME
Words and Music by
AL LEWIS and TOM WARING

There are usually themes to his weekend programme, 'Swingers And Singers', so Bing fits neatly into both categories as well as so many of the themes. Just how many titles are there with the word 'dream' in the title? Never counted, but 'Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams', 'A Man And His Dream' and 'Street Of Dreams' all qualify and were played by David. And who else would we look to for songs celebrating major anniversaries for Gus Kahn, Johnny Mercer, Harry Revel, Arthur Johnston and Hoagy Carmichael? Well, lots of Crosby available there of course including a V-Disc version of 'Small Fry' which Bing takes solo. Especially for a 75th wedding anniversary [can't be too many of those can there?] there was a special request for Bing singing Ray Noble's ballad 'Love Is The Sweetest Thing' which Bing sang a few times on the wireless from 1939 onwards, but not until Ken Barnes picked up the Buddy Cole version was it committed to record. Likewise 'I Can't Get Started' for a Gershwin tribute. Mack Gordon and Harry Revel wrote some great songs for Bing including the score to the film *We're Not Dressing* and 'Love Thy Neighbour' was selected to recognize Revel's birthday in December.

By now David was heading for the Christmas collection. Again, no problem for choice! 'Silver Bells' with Carole Richards is always a firm favourite and he elected to feature, for a change, what he considered 'the very rarely heard take-A' of the 1942 version of the annual favourite. Indeed, take-B is also very rarely heard either! It's always the post war recording that fills the air in supermarkets and department stores at the Yuletide season. However, one cannot expect our favourite presenter-supporters to have the in-depth knowledge enjoyed by members of this club! 'Singers And Swingers' can be heard Sunday evenings between 8 and 10 p.m. at 103.4 94.8 95.7 95.8 96 104.3 Fm. Also on DAB radio. Requests always welcome with plenty of notice.

MOST PRESERVED

'Classics And Curiosities' presenter **Russell Davies** declared on his programme that no one else has been preserved on tape to the extent that Bing Crosby has. Just about everything he ever did. Well, we know that that is not entirely true; how we would love to get our hands on the Old Gold broadcasts! However, we are lucky enough to have an incredible legacy of material available to us. This came under discussion in late December when Russell was looking for the earliest public airing of 'White Christmas'. He had discovered that it was on the Kraft Music Hall of the 25th December 1941, five months before Bing cut the two 78 rpm takes and eight months before the New York Paramount Theatre premiere of *Holiday Inn*. If you have that version you are one up on Russell who hasn't! A good alternative that he featured was Bing and Ella's highly listenable and very relaxed rendition of 'A Dreamer's Holiday' from a Chesterfield broadcast in November 1949.

Meanwhile, **Mr. & Mrs. Rennells**, Bill and Angela to fans of their programme, could hardly keep up with their requests for Crosby! Their Thames Valley broadcasts have been awash with records of our man including many dedications for ICC members including at Christmas a personal favourite; 'O Holy Night'. Also heard were 'Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town', 'The Secret Of Christmas', 'A Marshmallow World', 'I'll Be Home For Christmas' and 'I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day'. At least two score since last reported here, including Angela's favourite Bing track, 'The Kiss In Your Eyes', sung to her by an admiring swain when she was just twenty-one!

BAZOOKA

All you ever wanted to know about this bizarre instrument came to light on **Paul Barnes'** regular Saturday evening three hours of good music. Last

November's calendar featured a photo of Bing and Bob Burns on KMH; this particular Bob being the creator of the bazooka, an instrument producing a sound that can only be described as a resonant raspberry.

Bob Burns demonstrates his bazooka to Bing.

To illustrate this, musically, Paul played 'Song Of Napoli' which has a mercifully brief blast from the strange contrivance that was so famous it had an anti-tank rocket projector named after it! 'Devil May Care', the actual calendar song, also featured on that evening's 'Gold For Grown Ups'. Previously, Paul had played 'Some Of These Days', Bing with the Isham Jones outfit and a strong contribution from guitarist Eddie Lang. 'Bing in great jazz form' noted Paul, proving his natural ability in that department. For Christmas there was an excerpt from *Holiday Inn*, including 'Happy Holiday' and the annual anthem with Martha Mears about which Barnsey said 'I urge you to see the film. It has a preposterous plot but it's full of good stuff with a good feeling. A well considered piece of work.' And just to make up for the fact that the forecast of snow for Christmas didn't happen Crosby, Kaye, Lee and Stevens gave us their very own sprinkling of it for a full three minutes on Paul's Yuletide transmission

He was later to make reference to the programme *To Sing Like Bing* and included Bing with Bregman on 'Nice Work If You Can Get It' from their album 'Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings': 'I love that word 'whilst' !, said Paul. You should know where to find the programme by now, if not tune in to any of the local BBC radio stations covering Cambs., Essex, Norfolk, Northampton or Suffolk on Saturday evenings 6p.m. until 9p.m. or on the internet at www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria's Barrow Studios (Hartington St. Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 5SL, Tel: 01229 835252, Mobile: 0794 15 51 646, e-mail: anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk) continues to feature Bing quite regularly and Anne has kindly sent us details of some twenty-five tracks that have gone out over the airwaves from her Cumbria studio since last autumn. Some are Bing solos, but most are with fellow artistes contemporary with Bing; such as 'Blue Skies / I'd Rather See A Minstrel Show' with Danny Kaye, 'The Bold Fisherman' from a Chesterfield programme on which Bogie and Bacall participate, 'Hey Liley Liley Lo' with the rotund Mr. Burl Ives, 'I'm Falling In Love With Someone' who for the sake of the song is Frances Langford and inevitably Leslie Townes Hope and Bing's most popular partner, Rosemary Clooney. We are grateful to Anne and all those presenters who keep Bing to the fore on a very regular basis. A letter of appreciation via email or snailmail - with a request perhaps would be very appropriate.

****

There has been a TV series on one of the BBC channels entitled *Legends*, and one of them featured band leader-vocalist Louis Prima. A clip from *Rhythm On The Range* was included during the broadcast.

From Vernon Mealor a snippet of news that Peter Allis, in his TV golfing commentary from Wentworth on the anniversary of Bing's death, mentioned the occasion and played 'Anything You Can Do' featuring Bing with The Andrews Sisters and Dick Haymes.

Also, the Alistair Cooke tribute to Bing in one of his famous *Letter From America* broadcasts was heard again on the 29th November on BBC7. Yet another thirtieth anniversary remembrance.

Mark Spry informs us that he notes how much more Bing is mentioned in the crooner corner of the 'free papers'. A few years ago it was just Tony Bennett and the Rat Pack. 'I've been asked to sing Bing style at a wedding next year' he adds!

STATESIDE NEWS

In The States **Arne Fogel** has his program THE BING SHIFT and plays Bing on the radio for an hour every week as he has been doing for many years. His program can be heard internationally via the internet. It's on via KBEM Jazz88 in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota USA, and can be heard over the KBEM website. The show is heard in the U.S.A. at 8pm CST, every Saturday. Arne's website, www.arnefogel.com, features an easy link to the KBEM website, as well as the song listing for each week's program.

A major development was the decision by **Sirius Satellite Radio** to devote an exclusive channel to Bing during December 21-25. Sirius featured 20+ years of vintage Bing Crosby holiday radio programs. Bing's wife Kathryn Crosby and daughter Mary Crosby hosted the channel and shared their personal anecdotes and memories.

BING ON TV IN THE USA

Films shown in the USA since our last issue have included the following, several of which have been aired on a number of occasions.

Going My Way	HBO
High Society	Turner Classic Movies
Let's Make Love	Cinemax
Pepe	TELMUN
Stagecoach	Cinemax
That's Entertainment	Turner Classic Movies
The Bells of St. Mary's	Turner Classic Movies
The Country Girl	Turner Classic Movies
The Greatest Show on Earth	Turner Classic Movies
The Princess and the Pirate	Turner Classic Movies
White Christmas	ABC Family Channel
White Christmas	MNT

Greg Van Beek tells us that his local network edited *White Christmas* to make room for scores of commercials. They cut out the entire "Snow" number on the train and they also cut the song "Mandy" from the "I'd Rather See A Minstrel Show" medley. As Greg says, it's sacrilegious!

Greg, writing on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum, commented on the CBS-TV all-star concert special "Movies Rock" which aired in December. The finale featured the song 'White Christmas', sung by Tony Bennett. Queen Latifah introduced the song and Tony, called 'White Christmas' the "best selling and most beloved movie song of all time", and mentioned that Irving Berlin wrote it and Bing Crosby introduced it in the film *Holiday Inn*. At the close of Tony's portion, an excerpt from the finale of the movie *White Christmas* was shown on a large video screen that filled the entire stage, with the cast joining Tony onstage to sing along with Bing and Rosemary Clooney behind them. It was a fitting close to a retrospective of movie music sung by contemporary singers.

Greg also noticed that there was a brief clip of Frank Sinatra presenting Bing with the first ever Grammy lifetime achievement award (filmed November 11, 1963) on the CBS-TV special *My Night At The Grammy's*, which was shown on November 30. When handing the award to Bing, Sinatra quipped "Congratulations, der Bing, here's a little gold for your mint", to which Bing retorted "Oh, isn't this lovely!"

Frank presents Bing with his Grammy.

Jon Oye was watching a *Simpson's* rerun in February and was a little shocked to hear Bing singing a couple of lines from "Happy Holiday"—three different times. It was a Christmas episode from 2006, and the plot seemed to be based loosely on *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, as it was about a man the Simpsons invite into their home on Christmas Eve because they are responsible for his losing his job as a department store Santa. He ends up staying for months, which is illustrated with the old movie device of pages flying off a calendar. This calendar motif occurs four times; three times with Bing singing "Happy Holiday." Jon was pretty sure it was the soundtrack version from *Holiday Inn*.

In the UK, the only Bing film I spotted was *Road To Morocco* on the Sky Classics channel on February 16. A poor show! Perhaps we are luckier with radio.

Bert Bishop 21st February 2008

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Johnny Grant passed away on January 9th. He was Hollywood's honorary mayor and one of the movie industry's most enthusiastic supporters for over 50 years. His name may not be well known outside the USA but he was one of the hosts of the first national telethon with Bing, Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra in 1952. He landed a role in *White Christmas* when he played Ed Harrison, the character who introduces Bing to sing "What Can You Do With A General". He also had a part with William Bendix in *The Babe Ruth Story* before playing himself in 1966's *The Oscar*. Grant expanded into television and was well known for revitalising the Hollywood Christmas Parade after he signed on as a parade producer in 1978. He also hosted a variety of high profile TV shows and was awarded two coveted Emmy awards for his achievements in the industry - as well as the title of honorary mayor of Hollywood - which he was given in 1980 by the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. Grant was also chairman of the Hollywood Walk Of Fame Committee and oversaw the induction of over 500 stars into the legendary strip.

Dwight Hemion the legendary director/producer died on January 28th. He was 81. In his prolific career, he garnered 47 Emmy nominations and won 18. He is best-known for producing specials with such legends as Elvis Presley, Julie Andrews, Perry Como, Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, Sammy Davis Jr and Barbra Streisand. He worked with Bing on three specials - the 1975 Christmas show with Fred Astaire as guest, the Bell Telephone Jubilee and Bing's final Christmas show in 1977. Your editor interviewed Mr. Hemion by phone last year regarding Perry Como and when asked about his work with Bing, he said. "I liked him. He came with mixed credentials, a reputation for being harsh and tough with his kids, but I never found that. He was a good man."

Dwight Hemion was the first director of the *Steve Allen Show* in 1953, which went on to become *The Tonight Show*. He first worked with Perry Como in the 1960-61 series and remained with him until 1965. Perry

was the first top star that he had worked with. His friend Nick Vanoff had brought him into the Como show. Gary Smith was a designer on the Como programme and subsequently Hemion and Smith went into partnership together enjoying great success. Hemion also directed the 1973 *Julie On Sesame Street* and the Kennedy Centre Honors Shows which featured Perry Como. The last Emmy he received was in 1995 for *Barbra Streisand: The Concert*. Mr. Hemion told me that he had directed the last shows for Bing, Elvis and a comedian called George (something – not Burns, he couldn't remember) which led me to say that some artists might have become afraid to have him as their director with such a track record. Mr. Hemion laughed at that suggestion and said that there might have been some truth in it.

I asked Mr. Hemion for his comments on some other artists and of Frank Sinatra, he said it was a great thrill to work with him. Regarding Elvis Presley. Mr. Hemion said, "Elvis was rather removed from what we were doing." They wouldn't see him until he turned up to do the show. All matters had to go through Colonel Parker.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord's regular look at some of the many celebrities he has interviewed over the years who had a connection with Bing. This time it's a legendary film director under the spotlight.

Without exception every singer, actor and movie maker that I was privileged to interview for my 14 part radio series, "The Crosby Years", was an unabashed Crosby fan.

One of the most glowing and admiring tributes to Bing's talent and personality was by one of Hollywood's revered and acclaimed movie directors.

Frank Capra's name was synonymous with the dreams and aspirations of the generation that endured the Great Depression of the 1930s. His memorable films emphasized the dignity of the average man and woman, who were victimized by a dehumanizing political era, but never lost hope in the face of despair.

When Bing's close friend, Gary Cooper, appeared in *Meet John Doe* in 1941, Capra defined his optimistic approach to life. His inspiring family classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*, starring Jimmy Stewart, was a testament to his firm belief that there is inherent good in every person, and that every life influences the outcome of other lives. His philosophy for movie making was summed up in a simple statement: "What interests people most is people! An audience must be involved in the lives of screen characters; otherwise you won't have a believable or appealing story."

There is general agreement among film historians that Frank Capra's autobiography *The Name Above the Title*, is the definitive book about the movies and Hollywood's golden years. In 1980 I was fortunate to be invited by the renowned director to his estate in La Quinta, California. My pal Rich Little who like myself grew up watching Capra films, accompanied me to his desert home.

Gord (right) with Frank Capra at his La Quinta home

Frank Capra was six years old, the youngest of seven children, when his family arrived in the United States from Sicily. They settled in Los Angeles where his father worked in the area vineyards. Raised in the midst of ghetto poverty he sought escape through education. He worked his way through university and graduated in 1918 as a chemical engineer at the California Institute of Technology. After service in the US Army he was a mathematics teacher in San Francisco, before he "backed into the movie business." His story reads like a Horatio Alger novel, or the script from one of his movies – a rags-to-riches wonderful life.

That remarkable life ended September 3, 1991. Two years earlier the American Film Institute honoured him with their Lifetime Achievement Award. His death at 94 followed several years of failing health. His second wife, Lucille, died in 1984 after 52 years of marriage. She was a gracious hostess the day we visited their home near Palm Springs.

The winner of three Oscars as best director for *It Happened One Night*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and *You Can't Take It with You*, he began working in pictures only as a means of making a living.

At the fourth Academy Awards dinner in 1933, Capra and his Columbia associates were ecstatic that one of his films, *Lady for a Day*, starring May Robson, had been nominated for four Oscars. They were the studio's first nominations. When emcee Will Rogers announced the name of the winning director, he said simply and warmly, "Come and get it, Frank!" The Columbia table exploded with applause, while Capra walked toward the dais, only to discover to his great embarrassment that the winner was Frank Lloyd for the epic feature *Cavalcade!*

Lady for a Day began a chain of 11 consecutive hits for the immigrant boy from Italy, and was followed in 1934 by the first movie to win five major Academy Awards, *It Happened One Night*, starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. "Best picture, actor, actress, writer and director, I got them all when I didn't expect to win."

Capra had a sixth sense in getting exceptional work out of his actors. "It's the director's business to know how to coax the best performance out of a person," he

emphasized, "and there are many ways to do it."

One of the most unusual Capra film sequences took place in the 1951 comedy, *Here Comes the Groom*, which starred Bing Crosby and Jane Wyman. The action required the two stars to sing and dance through a lengthy production number that was shot on location in an office complex, went on to an elevator, descended a flight of stairs and emerged onto the street. A great admirer of Crosby, he knew that Bing liked to improvise as the cameras rolled. So rather than pre-record the song he decided to have the lengthy musical number performed live – which was unheard-of in movie-making circles.

"With Crosby, as he went along he thought of things to do. If you pre-recorded you locked him into the scene and he wasn't free to interpret his role. He was fantastic as he put in gags, little bits of business and ad-libbed a couple of lines in the song. When I found out that Jane Wyman could sing, I realized I had to have a duet for them and found "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" on the shelf at Paramount. It had been written years before by Johnny Mercer and Hoagy Carmichael for a project that fell through, and went on to win the Academy Award for 1951 in our picture."

He once wrote that Bing did with his voice what he was doing on film, reflecting the dreams and aspirations of the people of the time – he referred to him as the Voice of America. It wasn't until the 1950s that they worked together, when Bing starred in two of his romantic comedies, *Riding High* and the aforementioned, *Here Comes the Groom*. He felt that Bing's acting ability was underestimated and that he was without question the screen's most versatile performer.

"You could do things with Crosby," he told me, "that you couldn't do with anyone else; coordination, my goodness, he could juggle balls and play scenes at the same time – unlike most actors who can only do one thing at a time. He was the most un-actorish actor. One must never underestimate that it took great talent to do what he was doing. A tremendously talented man in singing, acting, performing – he was truly irreplaceable. He was so easy and wonderful to get along with, so able. Everybody knew he was the best popular singer ever, but he was also an outstanding actor – he could make you cry, make you laugh."

Frank Capra (left) with Gary Cooper and Bing

That was Frank Capra on a sunny California day in 1980, remembering Bing warmly and fondly. My interview with Mr. Capra concerning Bing is included on Part 10 of "The Crosby Years".

Gord Atkinson

[Editor: See Trading Post for details of 'The Crosby Years' series of CDs.]

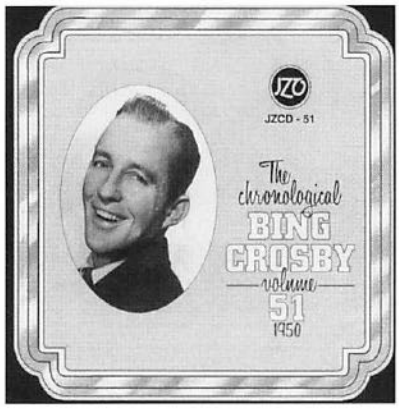
KEEPING TRACK

Ken Crossland looks at the new releases

COMPACT DISCS

The Chronological Bing Crosby **Jonzo Records JZCD50/51** **UK** **£10 each**

Vol. 50: 1. Eileen 2. How Can You Buy Killarney? 3. Sorry* 4. Stay Well 5. The Little Grey House 6. Quicksilver (with the Andrew Sisters) 7. Have I Told You Lately That I Love You? (with the Andrew Sisters) 8. This Could Be Forever* (with Louanne Hogan) 9. Helpless 10. My Own Bit Of Land* 11.When The Sun Goes Down 12. The Yodel Blues 13. The Big Movie Show In The Sky 14. Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo 15. Chattanoogie Shoe Shine Boy 16. Lock, Stock And Barrel (with The Andrews Sisters) 17. Ask Me No Questions (with The Andrews Sisters) 18. Life Is So Peculiar (with The Andrews Sisters) 19. High On The List (with The Andrews Sisters) 20. The Dixieland Band 21. Jamboree Jones 22. I Didn't Slip, I Wasn't Pushed, I Fell 23. So Tall A Tree



Vol. 51: 1. Accidents Will Happen* (with Dorothy Kirsten) 2. Milady (with Dorothy Kirsten) 3. Home Cookin' 4. And You'll Be Home 5. Once More The Blue And White 6. Accidents Will Happen (solo) 7. Wouldn't It Be Funny? 8. The Teddy Bears' Picnic 9. Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer 10. I Cross My Fingers 11. La Vie En Rose 12. Play A Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 13. Sam's Song (with Gary Crosby) 14. The Friendly Islands 15. All My Love 16. Early American* 17. Harbour Lights 18. Beyond The Reef 19. I Will Remember You 20. A Crosby Christmas – Part 1 (with Gary, Phillip, Dennis and Lindsay Crosby) 21. A Crosby Christmas - Part 2 (with Gary, Phillip, Dennis and Lindsay Crosby) 22. That Christmas Feeling

*=new to CD

I remember the day when John McNicholas turned up at the Leeds meeting in 1984 with boxes of LPs containing his new "chronological" series of Bing recordings.

That was well before the advent of CDs and it's sad that now, nearly 25 years on, the curtain is coming down as at September 1950. We owe John an enormous debt of gratitude for taking us so far and the good news of course is that series will continue under the Sepia banner, albeit with a different look and a new name.

For now, we can celebrate these two releases which tap into a period when Bing had rediscovered some of the authority in his singing that was missing from some middle Forties recordings. The highlights of these two CDs are the tracks that have been sourced from test pressings – there are eight on Volume 50 and seven on 51. You will never hear records like "Quicksilver" sounding better. The rest are good, with minimal surface noise, although for some tracks there are better versions around – "Harbour Lights", with its wonderful Bing vocal is good, but not as good as the sound quality on the "Best Of The Early 50s" CD that came out a few years back. Overall though, these are two marvellous discs and let's hope that Sepia will carry the torch on, at least to 1955 and the birth of the LP era.

I don't usually like giving too many details of future releases but in this case it is important for members to know what the forthcoming Sepia CD will contain. It's crucial for the continuation of the series that we make sure that this issue sells well. It's planned to issue it in May and it will be called 'Bing Crosby – Through the Years – vol. 1'. The tracks will be: Autumn Leaves - I've Never Been In Love Before - This Is the Time - Poppa Santa Claus - Mele Kalikimaka - If I Were A Bell - Silver Bells - Looks Like A Cold, Cold Winter - A Marshmallow World - Marrying For Love - The Best Thing For You - A Perfect Day - May The Good Lord Bless And Keep You - The Girl Friend - Without A Word Of Warning - You Gotta Show Me - Then You've Never Been Blue - Black Ball Ferry Line - The Yodelling Ghost - With My Shillelagh Under My Arm - St. Patrick's Day Parade - Sentimental Music - Silver Moon – Copacabana - Quizas, Quizas, Quizas.

Richard Tay of Sepia Records is only too aware that several tracks were issued a year or so back on his Good & Rare CDs but he has had no choice but to include them to maintain the integrity of the series.

Bing Crosby - Jazz Singer – Retrieval 79054 **USA** **$14**

1. Dinah (A take) (with The Mills Brothers) 2. Dinah (B take) (with The Mills Brothers) 3. Shine (with The Mills Brothers) 4. Sweet Georgia Brown 5. Some Of These Days 6. Please 7. Sweet Sue, Just You 8. I've Got The World On A String 9. My Honey's Lovin' Arms (A take) (with The Mills Brothers) 10. My Honey's Lovin' Arms (B take) (with The Mills Brothers) 11. Someone Stole Gabriel's Horn 12. Stay On The Right Side Of The Road (B take) 13. Stay On The Right Side Of The Road (B take) 14. Love Is Just Around The Corner 15. Moonburn (A take) 16. Moonburn (B take) 17. I'm An Old Cowhand 18. Smarty 19. Basin Street Blues (with Connie Boswell) 20. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby 21. Rhythm On The River 22. You Ain't Kiddin' (with Connie Boswell, from KMH) 23. My Melancholy Baby 24. The Waiter And The Porter And The Upstairs Maid (with Mary Martin and Jack Teagarden)

A welcome compilation of Bing displaying his jazz roots, with 24 titles, including some alternates and one aircheck. All but the aircheck are covered on the Chronologicals and indeed elsewhere, but anything that accentuates Bing's jazz heritage is always welcome.

It's Magic – Submarine Records **UK** **£7.99**

Disc 1 1. It's Magic 2. Hooray For Love 3. How Lucky You Are 4. Ramblin' Rose 5. Buttons And Bows 6. Until 7. The Night Has A Thousand Eyes 8. Maybe You'll Be There (with Peggy Lee) 9. Love Somebody 10. My Happiness 11. You're Too Dangerous Cherie 12. Nature Boy 13. Wildflower, I Love You (with Oscar Levant) 14. Look For The Silver Lining 15. Medley: What Is This Thing Called Love/Mandy/Exactly Like You (with Peggy Lee and Oscar Levant) 16. You Are Too Beautiful (with Peggy Lee)

Disc 2 1. Blacksmith Blues 2. Come What May 3. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (There's A Pawnshop On The Corner) 4. Please Mr. Sun 5. Everything I Have Is Yours 6. A Thousand Violins 7. Dark Moon 8. Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives To Me 9. Down Yonder 10. Feet Up 11. Glow Worm 12. Mr. Moon 13. Cockeyed Optimist 14. Now That I Need You 15. Maybe It's Because 16. Chee Chee-Oo Chee (Sang The Little Bird) 17. Blame It On My Youth / Lady Play Your Violin

Another welcome return to material that first appeared on LP round about the time that the Chronological series started out. The two discs feature Bing from radio in the late 40s, early 50s. Good listening.

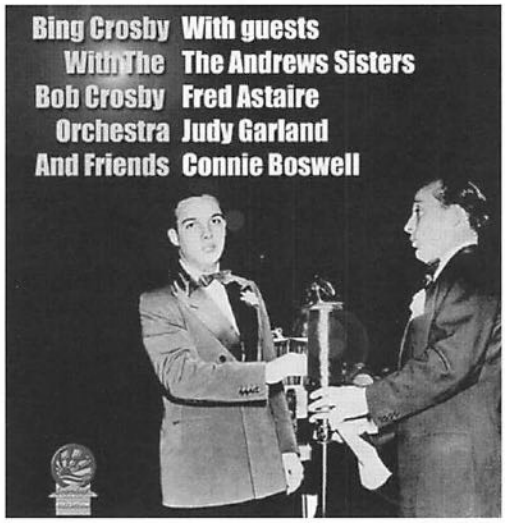
Bing Crosby Gold **Universal** **UK** **£8.99**

Disc 1: 1. Swinging On A Star 2. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 3. Moonlight Becomes You 4. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 5. Busy Doing Nothing (with William Bendix and Cedric Hardwicke) 6. So Would I 7. A Friend Of Yours 8. Gigi 9. I've Never Been In Love Before 10. Among My Souvenirs 11. A Weaver Of Dreams 12. Where The Blue Of The Night 13. I Whistle A Happy Tune 14. Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams 15. Dear Hearts And Gentle People 16. The Very Thought Of You 17. Sweet Leilani 18. Give Me The Simple Life 19. San Antonio Rose 20. The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (with Al Jolson) 21. People Will Say We're In Love (with Trudy Erwin) 22. The Folks Who Live On The Hill 23. Sentimental Music 24. Moonlight On A White Picket Fence 25. Blue Skies

Disc 2: 1. Anything You Can Do (with Dick Haymes and The Andrews Sisters) 2. Embraceable You 3. A Fella With An Umbrella 4. MacNamara's Band 5. Now Is The Hour 6. Getting To Know You 7. Galway Bay 8. Don't Fence Me In (with The Andrews Sisters) 9. Just One Of Those Things 10. Sam's Song (with Gary Crosby) 11. Like Someone In Love 12. Stardust 13. In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening (with Jane Wyman) 14. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 15. Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin' (with Trudy Erwin) 16. Pennies From Heaven 17. Play A Simple Melody (with Gary Crosby) 18. The Things We Did Last Summer 19. Just For You 20. I Can't Begin To Tell You 21. Marrying For Love 22. A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square 23. Silent Night 24. Deck The Halls/Away In A Manger/I Saw Three Ships 25. White Christmas

A very nice collection with some harder-to-find tracks mixed in with the more familiar. A competitively priced offering.

Bing Crosby With The Bob Crosby Orchestra And Friends **Sounds of Yesteryear USA $13.98**


Bing Crosby With guests
With The The Andrews Sisters
Bob Crosby Fred Astaire
Orchestra Judy Garland
And Friends Connie Boswell

1. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby 2. Old Folks, 3. My Reverie 4. Tea for Two (with Connie Boswell) 5. Yes Indeed (with Connie Boswell) 6. Christmas Greetings (with Bob Crosby and Connie Boswell) 7. San Antonio Rose 8. It Makes No Difference Now 9. Dolores (with The Merry Macs) 10. Pale Moon (with The Merry Macs,) 11. Lazy 12. Let's Start The New Year Right 13. I've Got Plenty To Be Thankful For 14. I'll Capture Your Heart (with Fred Astaire and Margaret Lenhart) 15. When My Dreamboat Comes Home 16. Walkin' The Floor Over You 17. Big Noise From Winnetka (Bob Crosby) 18. Two Sleepy People (Bob Crosby) 19. Begin The Beguine (The Andrews Sisters) 20. Long Time No See (The Andrews Sisters) 21. You're Easy To Dance With (Fred Astaire) 22. I Can't Tell A Lie (Fred Astaire) 23. Stompin' At The Savoy (Judy Garland) 24. Swing Mr Charlie (Judy Garland).

The first sixteen tracks on this CD feature Bing accompanied by the Bob Crosby Orchestra and all of these (apart from the Christmas Greetings item) appeared on the fairly recent Jasmine CD 'The Crosby Brothers'. The rest of the CD has two tracks where brother Bob vocalizes and five songs by three of the most notable artists of the day singing with the Bob Crosby Orchestra. They are The Andrews Sisters, Fred Astaire and a very young Judy Garland, before she appeared in 'The Wizard Of Oz', showing a maturity of voice that belies her age.

Bing & Friends **Sounds of Yesteryear** **USA $13.98**

1. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 2. A Couple Of Song And Dance Men (with Fred Astaire) 3. Swinging On A Star 4. Pennies From Heaven 5. Zing A Little Zong (with Jane Wyman) 6. You Are My Sunshine 7. Moonlight Bay (with Gary Crosby) 8. In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (with Jane Wyman) 9. Where the Blue of the Night 10. Anything You Can Do (with Dick Haymes and The Andrews Sisters) 11. White Christmas 12. Road to Bali (with Bob Hope) 13. The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (with Al Jolson) 14. The Whiffenpoof Song 15. Life Is So Peculiar (with The Andrews Sisters) 16. McNamara's Band 17. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 18. The Moon Came up With a Great Idea (with Peggy Lee) 19. Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean (with Johnny Mercer) 20. Connecticut (with Judy Garland)

This is apparently a re-release of an album which appeared in July 2000 and it will make pleasant listening, especially for those who are not as familiar with Bing as are many of us.

The Stephen Foster Collection **Jasmine Records JASCD 454** **UK £8.99**

1. I Dream Of Jeannie With The Light Brown Hair 2. Nell And I 3. Beautiful Dreamer 4. Sweetly She Sleeps My Alice Fair 5. My Old Kentucky Home 6. De Camptown Races 7. Swanee River 8. Old Black Joe - plus 38 tracks by other artists.

Wig Wiggins drew this to my attention and points out that this is the only commercial CD on which you will find all of Bing's Stephen Foster recordings in one place. Bing sang these songs with much feeling and great precision and if you don't have them already, buy this set. Many of the titles are repeated on the set by the different artists who include the Robert Farnon Orchestra and Sammy Kaye although apart from Bing, the highlight for me is the inclusion of the eight Foster songs recorded by Al Jolson. The set was composed by ICC member Robert Nickora of Lapeer, Michigan.

And in passing, a couple more CDs to look out for. Some years ago, Editor Malcolm went to the historic Plaza cinema in Stockport to see a restored version of *High Society*. Prior to the film, our member **Roy Chappell** sang a number of Bing's old hits accompanied by Michael Holmes on the Mighty Compton Organ and this really impressed Malcolm (see BING #131, page 26). Now, a CD has been put together of Roy Chappell singing many of Bing's songs from the 1930s accompanied by Mr. Holmes on the said organ. This is intended to raise funds to assist the charitable trust, which runs the cinema, with the continuation of its work of restoring the facade and front-of-house areas of the building. Twenty six tracks in all, cost £9, obtainable from The Plaza, Mersey Square, Stockport SK1 1SP, UK (make cheques payable to Stockport Plaza Trust).

Still on the theme of singers with a Crosby link, **Denny Dennis** was labelled (by others, not himself) as the "British Bing Crosby" in the late 30s/40s. He was a fine singer and until now, his Decca catalogue of solo (as opposed to vocal refrain) recordings has been overlooked. A new CD from Sepia puts that right. "The Bluest Kind Of Blues" is on Sepia 1108, at £7.99.

DVD

Not much to report on the DVD front, and some of what there is tends to have Bing as an also-ran, which is rather unsatisfactory.

Road To Bali / Road To Rio (HD DVD) BCI/Eclipse $14 all Regions

Whilst it's nice to have two of the "Road" films released in high definition the cover is misleading to say the least as it bears a large caricature of Bob and only some small photos of Bing and Bob together. That said, at least 'DVD Lounge'

had a nicely balanced review:
"Bob Hope and Bing Crosby's road films were a perfect formula for the duo. The two entertainers sang, danced and joked their way around the world (while remaining firmly planted in Southern California). There was plenty of mischief without tragic consequences. People keep trying their best to rip off these films (including TV's *Family Guy*), but rarely do they touch the masters. Hope and Crosby knew how to look smooth while constantly getting into trouble. Hope with his cheesy humour and Crosby with his crooner tones dominated the screen. This double feature disc contains *Road to Rio* and *Road to Bali*."

Other reviewers have different opinions about the HD quality, although all seem to agree that it's a step up from anything we have seen before.

Bob Hope Collection: My Favorite Brunette / Son of Paleface [HD DVD] Navarre Corporation $14 all Regions
Another couple of films in HD DVD where Bing makes only a fleeting appearance.

Unfortunately, all of the high definition discs are in the HD DVD format which is about to become obsolete as Toshiba has announced that it will no longer develop, manufacture, and market HD DVD players and recorders. This effectively ends the high definition optical disc format war and let's hope the films appear on Blu-ray discs soon.

The Bob Hope MGM Movie Legends Collection
Still with the Hope bandwagon, MGM/20th Century Fox have released this seven DVD set mostly of Hope's later pictures, which include "The Road To Hong Kong" and also "The Princess And The Pirate" and "Alias Jesse James" which include brief cameos from Bing. This appears to be available in Region 1 format only.

What's On The Web?
Ever wondered how a 78 rpm record was made? If you have internet access, take a look at http://www.archive.org/details/CommandP1942 , which features a short film from 1942. It follows the process of recording, mastering and disc pressing through the RCA factory at Camden, New Jersey. There is no direct Crosby content, although all of Bing's records in the pre-tape days would have gone through a similar process. It's fascinating.

Ken Crossland (ken@kencrossland.co.uk http://www.kencrossland.co.uk)

The Seasons album

We have had a number of 'false dawns' over the years concerning the release of this 1977 album on CD. In January, **Steven Lewis** on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum was moved to respond to an ongoing thread about the 30th anniversary of the recording. Steven said, "Most likely it will be a cold day in Hell before we have Seasons on CD."

A month later, **Ken Barnes** himself came back with a fascinating response.

> "Last month Steven suggested that it would be "a cold day in Hell" before "Seasons" makes it to CD. Well, don't look now but it looks as though the fires of Hell are starting to cool down a little. We are not quite there yet but it has been established that the company who have kept the album off the market since 1982 no longer hold the releasing rights. Now there is a possibility that another major company could be interested in releasing "Seasons" on CD with some selected bonus tracks. I can't say for sure when this will be but, hopefully, it will be before the end of 2008. What I can say is that I have received in total more than 3,000 requests for this album to be on CD which probably makes it the most sought-after of all Bing's studio recordings. And, of the six albums I made with Bing, this is certainly the biggest favourite with the musicians and singers. So keep your fingers crossed and watch this space."

Steve Fay was one of several who responded to this great news and he went on to pose a question.

> "Ken, if you are still following this conversation and if you have a moment to comment further, I wonder if you could share with us which of the songs on "Seasons" carries the richest memories for you still today—whether it is for certain qualities of Bing's performance, for your interactions with Bing during that session, or even for aspects of the recording or production process that you were giving special attention to in that instance?"

Ken followed up with:

> "Steve Fay asks what are my richest memories of "Seasons." Well, the album itself was a sort of pet project that I had kicked around with Bing for about two years before it actually came to fruition. The first track recorded was in Los Angeles in January of 1976 "Spring Will Be A Little Late This Year." The intention was to get straight into it with our next set of sessions in London, but United Artists wanted Bing to do more contemporary stuff which resulted in the "Beautiful Memories" album. However, we did manage to record the title track "Seasons" in L.A. in October of that year with the firm intention of recording the rest of the album in London the following spring.
>
> During that time, Bing and I exchanged quite a few letters on what titles we should feature and these stretched across many great titles like Gershwin's "Summertime," Victor Herbert's "Indian Summer (with Al Dubin's fine lyric), Jule Styne and Sammy Cahn's "The Things We Did Last Summer" (all of which he had recorded before) to more latter day songs like Michel Legrand and Johnny Mercer's "Once Upon A Summertime" and "Try To Remember." Bing felt that the album could do with some original material and he put forward the idea of a song that, instead of looking back on the seasons, should look forward to the coming year. That's when Pete Moore and I wrote "On The Very First Day of the Year" which he liked enormously and recorded in just two takes. Of this he said "There are so few songs that celebrate New Year and

this is one that I'd like to feature in next year's Christmas show" (meaning 1978).

He also felt that the album should not just be about the four seasons but it should act out like an allegory on a man's life. Which is why he suggested the album end with "Yesterday When I Was Young."

I tried to interest him in re-recording "White Christmas" and he asked "Why would I want to do that? " I said it would be nice to have a new stereo version with a modern orchestration. He shook his head and said "I can't see the point. I'd only be in competition with myself." He didn't mind re-recording "June in January" or "September Song." He even agreed to "Sleigh Ride" but suggested that we do something more modern with it. Pete Moore came up with a very stylish jazz-rock approach that Bing loved.

It looked at one point that the album would never materialise when, in March of 1977, Bing suffered that bad fall from the stage in Pasadena and crushed a disc in his back. But he eventually willed his way back to a state of health that enabled him to come to England for what proved to be an incredible workload. His last Christmas TV special with the family plus Twiggy and David Bowie - then came the completion of "Seasons." When he entered the studio he was cheerful and friendly, but he looked rather frail and it was obvious that his back was still bothering him. We all wondered what he would sound like. That first session was all ballads and he began with "September Song." Pete had written a particularly impressive arrangement and Bing responded in kind. From his opening notes we couldn't believe the majestic richness of that famous voice was coming from that frail figure who stood at the microphone in the midst of that large orchestra. Two takes was all it took to create that superb track.

Then we did Vernon Duke's sophisticated classic "Autumn In New York" - a tough song that only the best of singers would tackle. Again, he delivered an outstanding reading that easily stands comparison with Sinatra's classic 1957 version. This track is certainly one of my personal favourites and is as much due to Pete Moore's declamatory orchestration as it is to Bing's excellent vocal. When this first session was over, Bing looked at Pete and said "That's the finest string sound I have ever worked with." And I think he was right. The album had gotten off to a magnificent start.

The quality remained high throughout the two remaining sessions although Bing sang well at all times, his voice never quite matched the eloquence of that first session. But he made up for any slight shortcomings by offering some exceptionally stylish phrasing and jazzy undertones to everything he did. He even found a space in "April Showers" to whistle a couple of bars that sounded like pure Bix Beiderbecke.

We finished the sessions on September 14. Exactly one month later he was gone. But in that last month, he played two sell-out weeks at the London Palladium, another final concert at Brighton and did his last professional singing on the morning of October 11 at the BBC London Studios in Maida Vale. I was with him on that last day and, after the BBC session I took him to a photographic studio for the cover shot of "Seasons." After this I dropped him off at the Dorchester Hotel in Park Lane where we shook hands and he said "I'm off to Spain to play some golf and I'll see you fellas in California in about two weeks." He was referring to the planning of the next album we were due to make, a duet package with Bob Hope.

That was the last time I saw him. Three days later, news of his death was a front-page item on every newspaper and the lead story on every news programme in the world.

Of the six albums I produced with Bing was "Seasons" the best? Yes, I think it probably was. And that is certainly the opinion of everyone who worked on it. Shortly after its release it received the MTA Award as "The Best Easy Listening Vocal Album of 1977."

Let's hope that "Seasons" makes it on to CD soon. The fires of Hell can't be that hot!

But the thread wasn't finished yet. **David Lobosco** came in with:

> "Great Memories! You are so lucky to have gotten to know Bing Crosby, and Bing was so lucky to have a producer like you and a band like the Pete Moore Orchestra backing him. Did you or Bing have any songs picked out for the Bob Hope album yet? I am always curious what might have been!"

Ken Barnes was a little too busy to keep it all going so he asked **Greg Van Beek** to take up the matter for him. This is what Greg had to say and it's fascinating!

> "For the Summer, 1999 issue of the old BINGANG magazine, Ken Barnes kindly provided me with details of the songs tentatively chosen for Bing's next Polydor label album following 'Seasons' in 1977. Bing had signed a six-album contract with Polydor just two weeks before his death. In an e-mail today, Ken asked me to post these details here on his behalf, as he is immersed in work at the moment.
>
> The album was to have been a duet package with Bob Hope titled 'Bing & Bob: Straight Down The Middle'. It would have been their first full length duet album, and was to be recorded in November, 1977, while Bing & Bob were both in London for the November 21st TV taping of "America Salutes The Queen", a 3-hour special from the London Palladium honoring Queen Elizabeth II on the 25th Anniversary of her reign. Bing and Bob were to share co-hosting duties for this gala, with other guest stars including Julie Andrews, Paul Anka, Harry Belafonte, Alan King, Cleo Laine and John Dankworth, Rich Little, Shirley MacLaine, and The Muppets. Bing was to have performed the title song from his 'Seasons' album on the show. Following Bing's death, Bob Hope carried on the hosting duties solo, adding a special tribute to Bing, with Kathryn and Harry in attendance. The special aired on NBC November 29th.
>
> Ken Barnes and Pete Moore were to have met with Bing and Bob in late October, 1977 in Los Angeles to routine songs for the album. Hope was working on his "Bob Hope's Road To Hollywood" TV special at NBC in Burbank, and Bing was to have taped a segment with him shortly after his return from Spain. The show was to air on NBC October 28th. When Bing died, Bob shelved the show (it eventually aired in March, 1983) and put together a 90 minute tribute to Bing special in its place. It was titled "On The Road With Bing" and was comprised of clips from their movies and TV shows together. NBC was already promoting the

"Road To Hollywood" special prior to Bing's death. I have a press photo stating that "Bing Crosby & Lucille Ball will appear live with Hope and via film clips".

As Ken said, "We discussed the (album) project more with Bing than with Bob Hope, although I did have a rather lengthy phone discussion with Bob about it in September, 1977. The titles certainly included 'Straight Down the Middle', for which Sammy Cahn had promised me he would write a new special set of lyrics. There was also an original song which Pete Moore and I were in the process of writing called 'Let The Entertainment Start', which was abandoned on the news of Bing's death. Other titles included Cole Porter's 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' from *Kiss Me Kate*, and 'All I Need Is The Girl' from *Gypsy*."

"There were also some songs from the 'Roads', including 'Captain Custard' from *Road To Singapore* (never commercially recorded by Bing or Bob), 'Teamwork' from *The Road To Hong Kong*, and 'Road To Morocco' (with new lyrics by Sammy Cahn, unwritten at the time of Bing's death). Some of the others I can recall are 'Glow Worm' (for which Bing and I were discussing a new lyric approach), 'Two of A Kind' (by Johnny Mercer and Bobby Darin), 'Bob White (What'cha Gonna Swing Tonight)', and 'Style' (from *Robin & The 7 Hoods*). We were, of course, intending to firm up all of these plans when I met with Bing and Bob in late-October. During my last conversation with Bing, three days before he died, he said to me 'I'm off to Spain for a few days to play some golf. I'll see you in California in about 10 or 12 days, I guess. Call me when you get in and we'll get together with Hope and see what we can come up with'. Of course, it never happened."

At the same time Bing and Bob would have been together in London to record the album, they were also to have taped a joint appearance on BBC-TV's Michael Parkinson Show to help promote it. Yet another unrealized TV appearance for late 1977 was a guest appearance on "The Muppet Show". Jim Henson was working on some special new 'muppets' just for Bing's appearance on the show.

Of course there was also the planned album of Noel Coward songs for Decca/London records, the album with Joe Venuti (possibly paired with Les Paul to recreate the team of Venuti & Lang), a possible album saluting Busby Berkeley musicals, and perhaps another country-western album to have been recorded in Nashville, not to mention the planned concert tours of Australia, Japan, and Germany, and yet another stint at the London Palladium. In Spring, 1978, Bing and Bob were tentatively scheduled to begin shooting their first "road" film in 16 years, *The Road to The Fountain of Youth*, which would feature cameo appearances by John Wayne and Mae West, among others. Bing indeed left us still at the top of his game, and still in high demand."

Greg Van Beek

Steven Lewis had commented earlier in the thread:

> . . . Two albums that could stand a Ken Barnes remastering include "Hey Jude Hey Bing" and "Bingo Viejo." No one seems to know where the masters of "Hey Jude Hey Bing" are located, but the flat quality of the audio on the album could stand a competent remastering if the original tapes can be found. Bing's singing on "Bingo Viejo" was awful at points and if alternate takes exist it might be worthwhile to see if different takes could be edited together to make a more acceptable vocal product. Ken did this quite effectively in his work with Bing. It appears that the Crosby organization does own these tapes and so there is hope they may give them up to someone like Ken who can smooth over the rough areas where Bing reaches for notes he can't find.

Naturally, **Ken Barnes** couldn't resist the urge to come back in.

> My thanks to everyone for your continued enthusiasm for "Seasons," especially to Greg Van Beek for digging out the details on the planned duet album with Bob Hope. I should add that the projected recording dates for that album would have been about 40 days after the completion of routining and key-setting. I generally like to give Pete Moore at least three days to write each arrangement, so with 12 to 14 titles, 40 days would seem to be about right.
>
> With all this renewed activity on "Seasons," I must take some time off to sit down and listen to it. I don't think I've played it for about 5 years, so it will be nice to renew my acquaintance with it. If a new release is to take place, I would welcome the chance to do some re-mixing and investigation of alternate takes - just to see if I can improve on the original. But we're not there yet, so keep your fingers crossed.
>
> On Steven's suggestion that "Hey Jude, Hey Bing" and "Bingo Viejo" be reconstituted and remastered, I'm afraid I don't have any contractual links to these albums. So there's very little chance that I would ever be involved in those projects. Having heard "Bingo Viejo," I agree with Steven that it's a pretty slap-dash effort. "Spanish Eyes," I think is an embarrassment - especially where Bing hits the top note on his toes. I would have scrapped this track altogether and waited for another day when his voice was in better shape.
>
> Talking of Bing's range in those later years, his healthy range spanned about an octave and a fourth - which is basically sufficient to tackle almost any popular song. Billie Holiday, in her latter years, had little more than an octave yet she handled many tough songs like, say, Cole Porter's "Easy To Love" by the simple practice of inverting certain notes to avoid strain. The results, though not academically accurate, were still good. Bing, on the other hand, didn't do this and so, on a bad day, the flaws would show.
>
> The good thing about his later work though was the fact that he had started playing live concerts and became a working singer (something he hadn't done for many years) and this did his voice a power of good. If only he had spent more time singing scales and performing and less on the golf course. But he did pretty good in those last few years and I think he knew it. I was certainly privileged to be there when it happened.

Ken Barnes

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